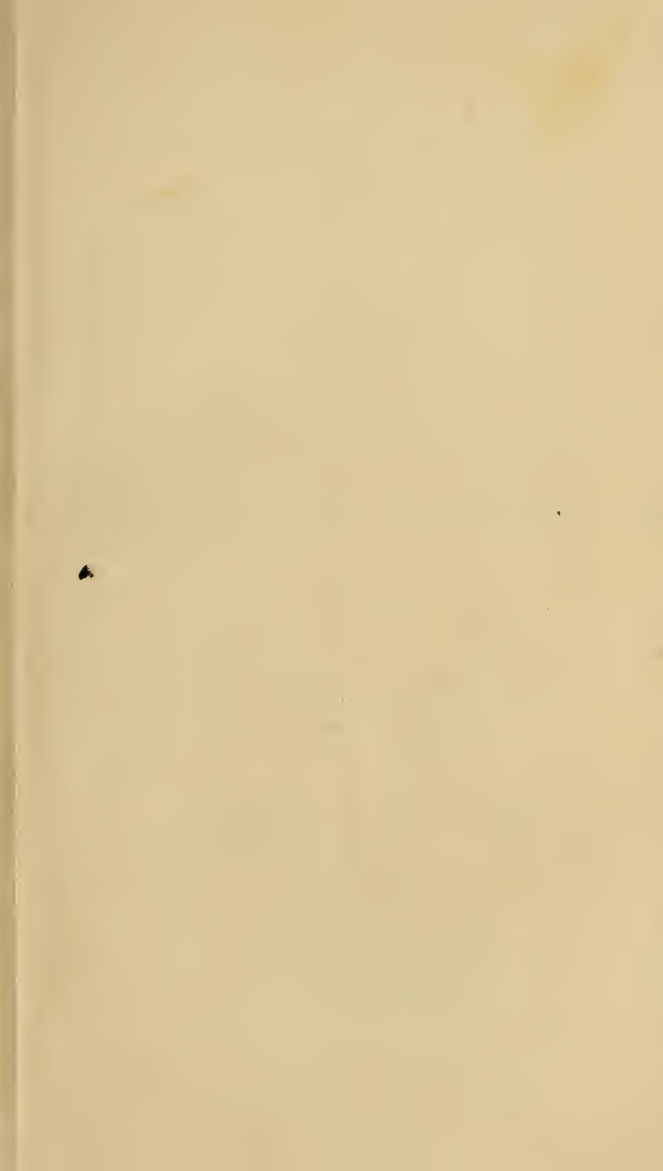


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# LECTURES

READ TO THE

SENIORS IN HARVARD COLLEGE.

BY

EDWARD T. CHANNING,

LATE BOYLSTON PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND ORATORY.



BOSTON:  
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.

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## PREFACE.

WHEN Bishop Manningham was requested to publish in a volume the sermons which he had printed separately at different times, he said to his son, "Prithee, Tom, let them alone; they lie quiet now; put them together and they will fight." The danger of inconsistency may seem very small, when the papers about to be published are still in manuscript. Though written at far distant periods, and during a time of life when the author's temper and opinions are peculiarly liable to change, yet, on a cool revision, he can omit what he no longer holds, and make peace between passages which, through inadvertence, are found to be somewhat at variance. I hope that, in preparing the following lectures for the press, I have made a proper use of my opportunity, and that the passages introduced upon the revision have not let in new and unobserved elements of discord. Very often, inconsistency may be more in the tone than in the matter, and not so much owing to a change in our views, as to the temptation to speak more strenuously of the

same or of related topics, at one time than at another. If we could always remember ourselves, we should be pretty safe.

I have not attempted a systematic view of rhetoric, either in compliance with the statutes of the professorship, or according to any idea of my own. So obvious will this be, that the lectures may often be more justly regarded as essays upon subjects suggested by rhetoric than as orderly treatises upon its proper topics. As I have taken but a part of the course for publication, and, for convenience, have sometimes divided a lecture according to the prominent topics, the separate articles will probably appear still more independent of each other and even of the art which they ought ever to have kept in sight.

In preparing this volume for the press, I see, — perhaps more distinctly than ever before, — that I have been travelling, in my own way, over old ground. How much I am indebted to others, I do not know; and probably the most careful notes of my reading for many years would not give an adequate account of my obligations. I have acknowledged those which I remembered, and must content myself with a general expression of gratitude for such as I have forgotten or was never aware of.

*Cambridge, June 10, 1852.*

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE.

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EDWARD TYRREL CHANNING was born in Newport, in Rhode Island, December 12, 1790. The biography of his elder brother, William Ellery Channing, has made all acquainted with the history of his family. Coming from Dorsetshire in England, they resided for several generations in Newport, and filled highly respectable positions in professional and commercial life. His father, after holding the offices of District Attorney of the United States, and Attorney General of the State, died young, leaving a family of nine children. The biography to which we have referred has also shown us the virtues and strength of mind of his mother, who was a daughter of William Ellery. The eldest brother, Francis Dana Channing, died young, like his father, while rapidly advancing in reputation at the Boston bar. The second brother in age, and third in order of death, was the celebrated divine. The eldest now surviving is the distinguished

physician and late professor in the Medical College of Harvard University.

Edward entered Harvard University in 1804, at the age of thirteen. He was not graduated in course, as he was involved in the famous rebellion of 1807, one of the few in which the students seem, on the whole, not to have been in the wrong. But he received his degree a few years afterwards, and, in 1851, the further degree of Doctor of Laws. On leaving college, he studied law with his elder brother, and was admitted to the Boston bar.

He read law philosophically and carefully, carrying along with his stricter professional studies, a course of reading in history and in the Greek and Roman classics. It was thought by his friends that he would ripen into a learned and accomplished jurist, as his mind was judicial, and his scholarship much above that of most of his contemporaries at the bar. But his paramount tastes were literary; and with a circle of friends, nearly all of whom have since become known to the public, he devoted himself chiefly to literary pursuits.

The North American Review, the earliest permanent periodical in America, had its origin in a club of young men who, in the winter of 1814-15, projected a bi-monthly magazine, to be called the New England Magazine and Review. The first mover in this undertaking was Mr.



Willard Phillips, then a tutor at Cambridge, and since judge of Probate, and well known as the author of the learned treatises on Insurance and Patents. Mr. Phillips was to be the editor, and committees were to be appointed for the different departments, who were to inspect and pass upon the contributions. The committee on politics was to be composed of George Cabot, James Lloyd, John Lowell, Josiah Quincy, and others. President Kirkland was particularly active and earnest in favor of the undertaking. The first meeting was attended by seven persons, of whom, in a memorandum found among his papers, Mr. Channing could only recollect besides himself, President Kirkland, Richard H. Dana and Mr. Phillips. The results of this meeting were given by Mr. Channing in a letter to his friend, Mr. George Ticknor, then at Washington, dated December 10, 1814, from whom the club had been promised an article upon Aristophanes, for their first number.

At this time, however, Mr. William Tudor, since known as author of the life of James Otis, returned from Europe, with a plan for publishing a periodical. The field not being wide enough for two, an amicable arrangement was made, by which the club discontinued their proceedings, which had gone as far as the issuing of circulars, the procuring of some subscribers, and a contract with publishers, and transferred their labors and

the good-will of their projected magazine to Mr. Tudor; and in May 1815, Mr. Tudor issued the first number of the North American Review. Mr. Tudor edited it for two years, when, in 1817, it passed into the hands of a club, composed of the members of the original club and a few others, among whom were Jared Sparks, since the distinguished historian, then a tutor in Cambridge, John Gallison, William Powell Mason, and Nathan Hale. Mr. Sparks edited it for one year, when the editorship was undertaken by Mr. Channing, assisted by his cousin, Richard H. Dana, both being under the age of thirty. The club now held weekly meetings for reading and deciding upon communications, and for selecting and distributing subjects to be written upon. These, though in some part business meetings, were kept up with much interest, vivacity and harmony; the literary friends of the associates often attended, and the zeal and spirit of the association became infused into the Review. With Mr. Channing's papers, we find his correspondence relating to the Review, including several letters of considerable interest. Among these, are letters from Mr. Bryant, with criticisms and suggestions on literary subjects, and from Mr. Verplanck and Chancellor Kent on matters of law and history.

In the autumn of 1819, at the age of twenty-eight, Mr. Channing was appointed Boylston

Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, at Cambridge. This terminated his editorship of the Review, which was transferred to Mr. Edward Everett, the proprietorship still remaining in the association.

The account of this literary undertaking is carried into these details, because it is thought to be an important chapter in the history of the periodical literature of America.

Mr. Channing held the office of Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory for thirty-two years. The students who enjoyed the privilege of his instruction, now to be numbered by thousands rather than by hundreds, in all parts of our land; and in all occupations, unite in grateful acknowledgment of their obligations to him. His reputation for pure style, and for exquisite taste and judgment in English literature, has been long established; and all who have been his pupils know how faithfully and successfully he brought these gifts and acquirements to bear upon the duties of his office. They acknowledge, too, his dignity, justice and impartiality, and his insight into character. They recognize, almost daily, the benefits of his criticisms in composition and elocution. But these constitute by no means the sum of their obligations. He was their adviser and guide in their reading: that which develops the minds and so much forms the tastes and influences the opinions of the young. Not merely

by his course of lectures, and by private interviews, but also in the voluntary reading classes that met at his study, he drew them from the fascinations of the superficial, brilliant favorites of the day, to the writers of deep thought, elevated sentiments and pure style. During the term of his professorship, he outlived many fashions of opinion and taste in literature and elocution. For thirty years and more, he stood a breakwater against the tides and currents of false and misleading fashions; and under that lee, in calmer airs, and in smoother but not less deep waters, the student was protected in his feebler and less skilful early efforts. Many will recall the quiet, keen, epigrammatic satire, that he used so sparingly and so well, with which he gave a death wound to the popularity of some ill-deserving favorite in oratory or poetry. Yet, though severe in his tastes, he was, on the whole, a wide liker. He was not fond of fault finding. He was no martinet. Wherever he saw sincerity, earnestness and power, no man made larger allowances for faults. So it was that, although decided in his convictions and exact in his tastes, yet, as is well known to his friends, those young men who early espoused and have since distinguished themselves in courses of doctrine and style most distasteful to him, still preserved intimate relations with him in college, and cordial friendships in after life. Thus he

escaped the condition in which too many nice critics find themselves, a condition marked rather by distastes than by tastes, and powerless for good influence over the tempers and feelings of the young. He was also much aided by his humor and wit, qualities which so liberalize and make genial the mind. In the exercise of these gifts he was choice and reserved, but as his humor was of that kind which springs from and attaches itself to what is general in human nature, it was widely received and well remembered.

It is in no spirit of disparagement to other institutions that we refer to the fact, that for the last quarter of a century Cambridge has been distinguished for the purity and elegance of its style in composition and elocution. And it is no injustice to other teachers there, indeed it is but uttering their common voice when we add that the credit of this is chiefly due to Mr. Channing. The department of themes, forensics and elocution has not usually, in our colleges, held a high position, compared with the other departments, as respects the determining of academic rank, and the attention to it has been less exact and obligatory. But Mr. Channing carried his department forward until its relative influence was so great that excellence in it became essential to honors and high rank, and neglect of it incompatible with continuance in college at all. Themes,

forensics and declamations became frequent, and distinction in this department more coveted than in any other.

If it be said in offset to this commendation, as has sometimes been suggested, that Cambridge has been less distinguished for boldness, idiosyncracies and vigor, waiving the question of the justice of the suggestion, we may reply that if true, or so far as it be true, this is not to be attributed to the department of rhetoric and belles-lettres, but rather to the classes of society from which the Cambridge students are chiefly drawn, and to the uniform set and drift of opinion in matters literary, political and religious, which has so long marked the highly cultivated, but small and rather removed society of which the university and neighboring city have been the centre. It may also be treated as one of the compensations which must always be made for the advantages of long established, reposing and highly educated communities.

Mr. Channing was a good classical scholar, and at one time made a particularly careful study of the Greek and Latin orators, and continued to the last to read a few of the poets, and the *De Officiis* and other essays of Cicero. But, his reading lay chiefly in the works of his own tongue. It is needless to say that he was a thoughtful student of Shakspeare, Milton and Spenser, and a familiar reader of the prose

writers of Queen Anne's time, and of Burke, Johnson, Goldsmith, Fielding, Richardson and Scott. All this, is of course. He was also a student of Chaucer and the earliest English writers, and of the old dramatists, and a lover of the unique and quaint, the novelists and humorists of all periods. The theologians, too, Barrow, Taylor and South, were the friends of his more serious leisure, which they shared with Young, Cowper and Bunyan. Of the writers of the Regency and since, while he yielded most perhaps to the charm of Scott, yet he was among the earliest to recognize the genius and influences, in their various characters, of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Southey, Campbell and Lamb. With our own literature, he had grown up. Irving, Cooper, Bryant, and Miss Sedgwick, were his contemporaries ; while Longfellow, and our historians, have gained their reputations since he came to maturity. In the productions of England at the present time, he saw so much of vicious style, and of questionable usefulness of thought, that he suffered them mostly to glide by him ; but to the humor and pathos of Dickens, with all his defects, he was fully alive.

Like most men, he passed through his period of metaphysical inquiry, and during that time he made careful study of the different schools, and knew well how the leading minds had treated the great problems of life. The result appears to



have been a preference for the philosophy of Reid, from whose style of thought he seemed to receive peculiar satisfaction.

In the department of oratory, Mr. Channing exerted an excellent influence upon the students. Respect for his judgment, and a wholesome fear of his satire, kept them from indulgence in that captivating, but eventually palling oratory, often so seductive to the young, and led them to the selection of passages from the poets and prose writers, the statesmen and advocates, whose reputations have been tested by time. He was not himself an orator. But there was in his public delivery, though neither impassioned nor exactly graceful, something which produced the unmistakable impression of a man of dignity and thought, a gentleman, speaking on a subject which he understood and felt. In more private familiar reading, of prose or verse, his style was nearly perfect.

In politics, like most of his relatives and friends, who gathered in the family circles of Judge Dana at Cambridge, and of Mr. Ellery at Newport, he was educated in the school of Washington, and adopted the opinions of the Federal party. Through life, he was conservative, in the true and high sense of that term. But with much that sometimes takes to itself that name, being little else than the results of timidity, love of security and indifference to



the rights and advancement of men, he had no more sympathy than with radicalism. He had strong instincts of liberty; and his sympathies were always with the efforts for reasonable and responsible systems of freedom, at home or abroad.

In 1826, Mr. Channing married his cousin, Henrietta A. S. Ellery, who survives him. From his appointment until he resigned his office in 1851, his life was strictly academic. The announcement of his resignation surprised his most intimate acquaintance. He had formed an early resolution to retire from office at the age of sixty, and although in full vigor, and with good reason to look forward to many years of health and ability, he refused to recall his resignation, resisting the most flattering and pressing requests from his brother officers and friends.

Mr. Channing was a member and communicant of the church attached to the college chapel. In his theological opinions, he was a Unitarian, of the old school. He did not embrace the doctrine of the Trinity, but he held high and reverent views of a personal Deity, of the nature and offices of the Saviour, and of revelation. Close as was his intimacy with the English classical authors, there was no book he knew so intimately and so nearly by heart, as the Holy Scriptures. In these he was a daily and devout reader.

Of his conversational talent, his friends need not be told, but it will be a pleasure to them to recall its charm. Natural, free, animating, humorous, and, when need be, using against any predominant folly or evil, that classic, restrained, but effective satire, of which he was a master, his style in conversation was as pure and choice as in writing. But it was not a finish or choiceness which labored or embarrassed. It was as natural to him, as awkwardness and solecisms are to many. Not a professed story-teller, in characteristic anecdote or graphic description of persons, classes or neighborhoods, in portraying what was peculiar in character or manners, he was not easily to be surpassed. Still, his best conversation was his most thoughtful. While no man more readily fell into, or more successfully sustained the humorous, it was strictly his recreation and not his habit. His numerous friends and relatives, who enjoyed, at his house, the weekly Saturday dinner, at which, without special invitation, it was known they were always welcome, will take a sad pleasure in calling to mind, among the beauties and privileges of their lives, the attractions that presided at either end of the table, dividing their attention and doubling their delight.

As he was not a professed wit, so he was not a controversialist. His powers were best seen in the contemplative, in the pursuit of serious

thought, or of beauty in nature, art or character. As a letter-writer, he was valued by his friends beyond price. Perhaps there was no field in which his talents played more naturally and fitly than in the light and shade, the affectionate, grave and humorous of friendly letter writing.

Throughout life he retained the warmth of his affection for the young; and any one who had the claim upon him of blood, or of childhood or youth, must have been ill-deserving indeed not to have held an inner place in his heart.

It has been remarked of him by one who knew him intimately from boyhood, that although society or intercourse with a single friend always pleased and animated him, and his powers particularly displayed themselves in conversation, yet he was as fond of being alone as if he had been unsocial and morose. His preference for solitude arose from the cheerfulness and equanimity of his temper, and his great resources in himself for pleasure and improvement. A change to society was not unwelcome to him, but the return to solitude was even more congenial.

All that we have here attempted to portray has gone from us. But it will live in the recollections of his friends; and when they too have passed away, it will still linger in the traditions of the university and city.

Mr. Channing left no children, but a band of

most attached relatives, in every degree of consanguinity, and at all stages of life, followed his body to the grave. He lies by the side of his brother William, at Mount Auburn.

Mr. Channing was not known as an author. That is to say, he published no book. But in his influence over the taste and judgment of the men who learned from him, it would not be easy to estimate his indirect contributions to the literature and eloquence of America. He was, still, widely known and highly valued as an occasional contributor to the *North American* and other reviews. His life of his grandfather, William Ellery, in Mr. Sparks's series, is one of the most exquisite of American biographies.

In the leisure of the few years after his retirement from the professorship, he prepared, out of his course of lectures on English literature, the following series of *Essays*, for the press. They are published just as he left them, in the hope that they may be suggestive of pleasing memories to his pupils, and may add a valuable contribution to the critical literature of our country.

RICHARD H. DANA, Jr.

## THE ORATOR AND HIS TIMES.

---

MANY subjects are suggested by the duties of my office, which would very properly give a direction to my thoughts in preparing an address for this occasion.\* In making a selection, my attention has been drawn to *circumstances in the state of society, which distinguish the modern from the ancient orator*; and a few considerations suggested by these may be sufficiently appropriate for my present purpose. I believe there has never been a serious doubt amongst us that there were ample opportunities and inducements, in the free states of these times, to call forth and perfect the highest qualities of oratory; and as the art is thought by many to have fallen with the old commonwealths, it seems proper, in every attempt for its revival

\* This Address was delivered in the chapel of Harvard College, December 8, 1819, on the occasion of the writer's induction into the office of Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory.

The Address was published at the time. In the re-print, there are omissions and other changes.

or improvement, to determine the kind of eloquence which should be cultivated now.

We look back to the best ages of those commonwealths, when society, letters, and all the liberal arts were advanced the farthest, and we find eloquence the favorite and necessary accomplishment of all who were ambitious of rising in the world. It formed the earliest and most important part of education. The greatest care was taken that the child should first acquire the language in the utmost purity, and that an inclination to the forum should be amongst the earliest and most decided preferences. The rhetorician opened his school, and professors of oratory and wisdom became part of the household, to bring up the young scholar to the art, and impress him with a sense of its præminence among liberal pursuits and popular accomplishments. The institutions of the state, the taste, wants, and habits of the people, all invited him to fit himself for command in the senate, the public meetings, the courts of justice, and even the field of war, by the vast preparation of a perfect orator. Did he listen to the instructions of the moralist, the subtile disputes of the sophist, or the systems of the philosopher; did he acquaint himself with the history or visit the scenes of great actions; was he present at the debates of the fathers or the riots of the mob;—he was always arming himself for the fight of eloquence,

or, as it was called, to approve himself a man-at-arms in the war of pleaders. He studied the temper of his countrymen to know how to manage them. It was his office to produce a great effect on popular feeling; to mingle in all the concerns of men, direct their counsels, share their pride, and even take advantage of their frailties.

In the state of society at that time, we find abundant cause for this enormous power and importance of oratory. There was every temptation to be a great orator, and there were few restraints upon his abuse of the art. You remember the general ignorance of the common people. The proud republican deemed it the part of loyalty to think as his countrymen thought. It was not for him to acquaint himself with distant nations for the sake of correcting his false notions or enlarging his narrow views, by knowing what others thought of his country or of subjects that were most interesting to her. It was not for him to read and reflect, and thus instruct himself beforehand in the questions he might be called to consider. The popular orator was the great teacher then. The minds of his audience were to be formed, their passions moved and directed, their opinions regulated by his address. They were assembled without preparation, to decide according to the impulse they should receive at the time; and



they were to decide, too, upon questions that concerned the glory and safety of the state, which appealed to their most vindictive as well as most generous feelings, to ancient pride and friendships, and which opened to their imaginations boundless visions of national splendor and conquest.

I have spoken of their ignorance;—they wanted, indeed, that knowledge which makes men think, and thus lends sobriety to passion. But they were far from being buried in the sluggishness of ignorance. A delicious climate and beautiful scenery, and unequalled works of art made no vain appeals to the warm hearts and imaginations of the whole people. A proud recollection of his fathers, a strong consciousness of personal honor in everything that distinguished his country, an identification, if I may so call it, of himself with the state, and a sublime self-devotion to its cause, all these met in the lowest citizen of the ancient republics, and made him worthy of his privilege. To the orator, he was a being formed of imagination and passion,—the powerful slave of those who kindled and flattered him. He called for excitement, violent excitement, and went to every subject of the deepest public interest, and which his vote was to affect, with a mind at the service of any one who would act upon it most powerfully.



And what was the situation of this inflammable population? They were not, as is the case in powerful states now, spread over a wide territory, and agitated, and influenced in their public conduct, by a great variety of interests. A diversity of pursuits and local interests did not split the commonwealth into parties, which kept each other in check, and led men to compare their opinions, and even learn something like moderation towards other nations, by the forbearance they were obliged to show each other. The ancient republics were, for the most part, of small extent. The efficient and governing population was crowded within the walls of a city, where every influence was exerted to nourish and perpetuate a strong national feeling. The whole state could assemble at public deliberations; and the orator, who there carried his point, carried with him the commonwealth.

The power of the ancient orator may be further seen in the freedom of discussion which was allowed him in courts of justice. He could rarely feel that he was there addressing men, who, in their severe love of truth and right, had shut their hearts against all appeals to passion, or dread of public indignation; whose respect for themselves, not less than for justice, admonished the advocate that they considered persuasion but as one form of cor-

ruption. He could rarely feel that a case was to be decided by solemn and respected precedents, or absolute, written laws, which required only a fair and luminous exposition, in order to ascertain and irrevocably settle the rights of parties. He was allowed to go beyond the law, to talk to judges as men whom he could instruct and work upon, as men who could be made to feel some private interest in the question or the parties, and regard the merits of a case merely as it was presented by the advocate or affected by accidental circumstances, and not in the consequences of their decision upon the lasting security and dignity of the state. We find the orator, therefore, as powerful in the courts of justice as anywhere else ; — not merely by the admirable arguments which he prepared for posterity, but also by appealing to the selfish interests, the antipathies and friendships, the honorable or unworthy feelings, of those who were sitting in judgment upon individual rights.

Once more, we may account for the power of the ancient orator, from the effects of the false estimates which prevailed on the subject of national grandeur and happiness. Nothing was sooner upon the lips of the old republican, than his love of freedom and of his country. But what were liberty and patriotism then? Did they show themselves in a love of social

order and temperate government, and in a livelier jealousy of a domestic usurper than of a foreign rival? Did they lead the citizen to value the comforts of home, the substantial improvements and ornaments of life, the solid institutions of a deliberate and virtuous commonwealth, infinitely more than his sway over other nations, that were too distant even to share his blessings, much less endanger his security? No — through all the splendor which genius has thrown over the old commonwealths, we can easily discern that the spirit of their governments was thoroughly warlike, that their love of freedom was another name for ferocious lawlessness, and that their love of country cloaked a boundless ambition of power. He was the favorite who could swell the empire, multiply its resources, crowd the streets with trophies and captives, and make the world itself the prison-house of one master.

This was not to be effected by the silent management of a despot, with hired troops and forced revenues. The whole people breathed this aspiring spirit in the days of their highest glory and best freedom. They had no rights, no privileges, no enjoyments, which they were not perfectly willing to trust to the chances of an aggrandizing war, and of the domestic turbulence and factions which grew out of their passion for war. Society was unsettled and

irregular throughout, and seemed to be a combination for extending power, rather than for establishing a prosperous security. Here, then, was room for the orator to pamper the pride of conquerors, or rouse the courage of the defeated by making their shame imbitter their hate. National vanity, national ambition, were the principles he was perpetually called on to address. Were there evils in the state which required sober and thorough reform? The orator could draw the attention of the discontented to some foreign enterprise, or fix it upon a victim at home, and tempt the rabble to waste their irritation upon an unpopular public benefactor, or upon some harmless neighbor whose liberty gave offence. Were there factions in the state which threatened its safety? The orator was at hand to aid the designing or rescue his country. Was the invader approaching in an hour of security or despair? The orator was called on to form alliances, negotiate with the enemy, breathe the spirit of resistance into his countrymen, and sometimes to waste the noblest strains of human eloquence over the last struggles of ill-adjusted and ill-guarded freedom. The perpetual recurrence of dangers to individuals or the nation, against which there was no sufficient guard in well-administered laws and a wise, pacific policy, put their safety very much into the hands of the influential orator, by

offering him constant opportunities and temptations for the worthiest or most fatal use of his powers.

It was under these and other favorable circumstances, that oratory acquired such popularity and preëminence in the ancient commonwealths. It was not merely a splendid accomplishment, but an important instrument in the hands of the most virtuous and most aspiring citizen. It connected him intimately with his countrymen, their private interests, their public influence; it gave power and secured it to those who were ambitious of important station, civil or military, in the republic; it found opportunities for exhibiting itself everywhere; the very language seemed to be formed for the public speaker; while the state of society, the popular cast of the existing institutions, invited him to carry his art to the utmost, to put no restraints upon himself which could make victory doubtful or incomplete, to produce always the strongest possible excitement, and to carry his point by appealing to any principle of human nature which would aid him, without feeling any responsibility, in the exercise of his tremendous power, as to the permanently bad influence of the abuses of his art.

We cannot wonder, then, that ancient oratory has been regarded as a complete exhibition of all that is excellent and mischievous in public speak-

ing. We cannot wonder that an employment so honorable and popular in active life, should have been reduced to an art of most finished beauty and practical application, and systematically explained and recommended in rhetorical treatises. We cannot wonder that these treatises are so perfect, when it is remembered that the rhetorician had the orator before him, and saw not only the effect of his eloquence, but the ways in which it was produced,—all the springs of action touched and set in motion, the prejudices of men humored or overpowered, their imaginations kept in ceaseless activity, their passions turned every way at the will of the orator. We look to the ancient rhetoricians for the modes in which a public speaker is to influence the will of his hearer and command a popular assembly; remembering, however, that the rules they have left us are to be applied now with a wise regard to the altered condition of society. We study the ancient orators, not merely as useful in rhetorical instruction, but also as occupying an important place in literature, affording examples of great and finished men in active and political life, enabling us to understand more thoroughly the history and character of the people, and thus enlarging our views of human nature.

But oratory, now, is said to be almost a lost art. We hear constantly how it has fallen from



its old supremacy. You look at the few free states of modern times, and find no schools of rhetoric, crowded with the young and ambitious, who are preparing for active life and future grandeur by their accomplishments in eloquence. Is this so, because we have learned to despise our masters? Has their literature lost its hold upon our affections and veneration? Do we throw away their poetry and their eloquence, as the worthless ornaments of a voluptuous and decaying people? There never was a time when they were held in juster veneration than at this day,—a veneration that could be more grateful to those who inspired it. There never was a time when the disposition was stronger to make classical literature practically useful; to take it from the sophist, the disputant, the overloaded, slumbering scholar, and place it in the hands of the philosopher, the soldier, the physician, the divine, the jurist, and the statesman. It is the spirit of the age to turn everything to account, and to let no good learning remain idle. How is it that eloquence has lost ground? There are not more who seriously deny its uses now, than there were in the ancient states. Not a day passes without putting it in our power to exert some profitable influence by speech, over the will, judgments, and actions of others. There are popular governments on the earth now, where ambition and patriotism and the

free expression of our opinions are yet countenanced and rewarded, and where honor and usefulness follow influence as surely as they did in the age of Philip or of Cæsar. Besides all this, there are few topics more popular amongst us than the greatness of ancient orators, and scarcely anything in ancient literature is more valued, or more confidently recommended to the young, than the orations and rhetorical writings.

It is indeed true that we have no schools of rhetoric, in which the whole education of a young man is directed with a close regard to his becoming a finished orator. The style of speaking which was irresistible in an ancient assembly, and the acquisition of which required the labor of years, might now be despised, even if it could be perfectly acquired. And it must also be confessed, that too little attention is paid to the cultivation of that kind of eloquence, which would now be most successful. Still, I think it unquestionable, that the oratory of modern free countries is, in character, as precisely formed by and suited to our state of society, as that of the ancients was accommodated to theirs; and that it would be scarcely less ridiculous to lament over the decline of their oratory amongst us, than it would be to lament over the decline of good government, morals, and philosophy since the days of the triumvirate.



The object of eloquence is always the same, —to bring men, by whatever modes of address, to our way of thinking, and thus make them act according to our wishes. Whatever society wants for this purpose, it will have. If the ancient oratory were in demand now, it would awake from the sleep of two thousand years without the aid of the rhetorician. If the world had languished and gone backward for want of it, there would be some reason to complain at our suffering such a means of improvement to lie unused. But we know that it is from the very improvements of the age, the stable foundation and ample protection of government, the general diffusion of knowledge and of a spirit of inquiry, —it is from the prevailing disposition of free countries, now, to make the security of individuals and of the state rest on laws and institutions, and not on popular caprice or the power of any one man,—it is from these circumstances that we are to account for what is reproachfully called the temperate and inefficient character of modern eloquence; and every judicious attempt for the improvement of the art will proceed on a thorough knowledge of these circumstances and a careful regard to them.

Strange as it may seem to us, after hearing so much lofty declamation about the power of great speakers, whom nations listened to and obeyed, it is nevertheless true, that the orator

is the creature of the circumstances in which he is placed. He is formed by the same influences that form his neighbors ; he must fall in with their taste, accommodate himself to their wants, and consult their prejudices and general tone and habits of thinking. It is perfectly visionary to suppose, as some have done, that a few great men, by taking advantage of public enthusiasm, during the stormy periods of a free government, might effect an entire revolution in eloquence, and revive it in its ancient spirit and power. Such a revolution might be forwarded by their skilful exertions, but it could only be wrought by those secret and slowly operating causes which change entirely the face of society, the character and, in some degree, the occupations of a whole people. At present, however, we think it one of the happiest, and we trust most permanent distinctions between our state of society and the ancient — and the effect of this distinction is very observable in modern eloquence — that the power of individuals is lessened ; we do not encourage any man to aspire after an overwhelming greatness and sway.

When we read the history of the most democratical states of antiquity, we are constantly struck with the controlling influence of a few leading men, who appear to produce every change, however tremendous, by some vast and unexpected efforts, either of headlong violence

or hidden contrivance. There is little apparent connection between the successive changes. They seem to result from individual ambition and energy, acting independently for the advancement of one man. Revolutions, tumults, vast military preparations, excited and directed by a few, appear to be the main business of life. The orator, the commander, his elevation and fall, these are the important incidents and personages that are constantly thrust upon our notice; we are always looking at a few prominent men and their extraordinary deeds. But when you look at society now, you see everywhere a disposition to place the security of nations and of every individual on the broad foundation of laws and institutions, and to make it the interest of the highest as well as humblest citizen to respect and trust in them. We never need great men now to take the place of laws and institutions, but merely to stand by them and see that they are unobstructed and unimpaired. A great man is perpetually taught now that the world can do without him; that in all his attempts to be useful, he is rather to coöperate with a thousand others than become the master of any one.

Instead of feeling humbled at this, he is proud and grateful that his lot is cast among equals; that his country rests on better supports than his life or character; and that those who would

advance her glory and happiness, or effect any change whatever, cannot expect to do it by sudden and independent exertions of great power, by taking the state into their own hands, and becoming at once the mind, the voice, and the arm of a whole people, but only by an open, well-approved influence on public opinion, and a judicious concert with others, who are jealous of their own powers and rights, and not to be cheated or forced out of them. Great men are still found in free nations, and have enough to fill their ambition, though it is kept in subordination to the solid good of a country. And what has been the effect of this state of things upon the orator? He has not escaped the restraints that are thus laid on individual power, nor the circumstances that thus lessen individual importance. He can no longer be a despot, either to save freedom or destroy it. He is not the important personage he once was. He is fortunately less able to do harm, and less needed to do good.

But his consideration and power are not diminished merely because society is now under better regulation and more perfect security than it was formerly. The general diffusion of knowledge has had the same effect. We have now many other and more quiet ways of forming and expressing public sentiment, than public discussion in popular assemblies. Opinions

are constantly coming to us from other men and all parts of the world, through many channels, and we are thus enabled to instruct ourselves, and to think liberally and independently on all subjects, and especially on the opinions that are most current at home, and which the ancient orator might have appealed to with unresisted and terrible power. In the ancient republics, the orator might control the audience, but now we see the audience controlling him.

A modern debate is not a contest between a few leading men for a triumph over each other and an ignorant multitude; the orator himself is but one of the multitude, deliberating with them upon common interests, which are well understood and valued by all. He does not come to a raw, unprepared audience, brought together to receive opinions for the first time, from him, upon questions they are to decide, and to give themselves up rashly to any one who will flatter their weakness, consult their prejudices, or minister to their taste or passions. They are not assembled to be the subjects upon which he may try the power of his eloquence, but to see what eloquence can do for the question. The subject is more thought of than the orator, and what he says must come from the subject rather than from his art. The excitement he would produce must follow

and mingle with conviction, not take the place of it; — the splendor that surrounds him must be the natural light of truth, not the false brilliancy that startles and blinds. He must not be surprised to find men the most deliberate, and most incapable of rashness or delusion, in those troubled seasons, when an ancient orator would have had nothing more to do than add the storm of his eloquence to that of the state, and make men find their safety or ruin in their desperation.

A superficial observer of modern society might suppose that a great deal of admirable eloquence was now lost, because its effects were not immediately obvious. He would say that, in courts of justice, the orator was thwarted by the cold vigilance of judges, or the restraining formalities of practice, and that eloquence in our political deliberations must be unavailing, because parties are bound down to an arbitrary course of political opinion and conduct. And though in listening to instructions from the pulpit, the audience are not supposed to be thus on their guard against the power of an orator, yet as the hearer goes to the world again with no striking change in his opinions or conduct, as a manifest and immediate effect is seldom the consequence of the best sacred eloquence, some might be weak enough to think that even this eloquence was but a



solemn and customary parade of instruction. But would it not be more philosophical to ascertain whether these apparent discouragements and restraints had not modified and given a peculiar character to eloquence without impairing its efficacy? You admit that the orator is addressing men who are slow in receiving and abandoning opinions, who are too wary, conscientious, or wilful to be easily and suddenly operated upon, and who are, at the same time, so intelligent and thoughtful, that they cannot wholly escape the power of just sentiments, however unwelcome they may be. And you find, accordingly, that the eloquence which prevails among them is suited to have a growing and permanent influence over the character and opinions, even where it does not produce, at once, an obvious effect on the decisions and conduct of men. It aims at making men think patiently and earnestly, and take an active part themselves in giving efficacy to another's arguments or persuasions. It has only to secure a lodgement for truth in the mind, and by and by the truth will quietly prevail.

Does any one suppose that in such a state of things, the resources of the orator must necessarily be diminished by the entire exclusion of feeling and imagination from modern deliberations; that plain wisdom, clearly expressed, is

all that society demands now ; that there is no longer any room for persuasion, good or bad ; that the heart is shut up, and the judgment only allowed to venture within the influence of other minds ? This is another false estimate which has been formed of modern oratory, and it has the same tendency as that already considered, to discourage a cultivation of the art ; the one by demanding a style of oratory which cannot be acquired and would not be endured, and the other by making the art so insignificant as not to be worth ambition. The true dignity and resources of the art are not lessened ; the improved state of society is not unfavorable to passion or imagination, whenever the subject and occasion deserve it and are suited to awaken it. Raise the moral character of a state as high as you please ; give all classes a proper regard for the institutions, habits, and opinions that alone can establish their happiness ; let the public conduct of men be invariably the result of settled principles, and not of vague, transient impulse, and you will find, indeed, that society is tempered and softened, but not tame and lethargic. The earthquake and whirlwind are stilled, but an active and abundant growth is going on everywhere.

If I were told that the heart and imagination had necessarily grown torpid, while society was becoming more regular and cultivated, that our



best powers were sacrificed in order to our well-being, I should ask for the evidence of this much sooner than for the reason. I would even venture to ask how the fact was with regard to eloquence itself. I would take the best and most characteristic specimens of English eloquence in different ages, and learn from them if the imagination had perished under the chilling restraints of an improved society. Can you point to productions of ancient eloquence, where this power appears to have had such perfect riot and joy, and to have been so peculiarly the warming and animating principle of the speaker's thoughts? It seems as if the effect of our increased knowledge had been to make men more contemplative, live less upon the public for excitement, feel the most deeply when alone, and suffer their imaginations to enter into and warm and illuminate their most serious thoughts. It is, indeed, true, that the imagination and passions do not predominate in modern eloquence; they are not our turbulent masters. Still we think it a false philosophy which tells us that it can ever be the effect of general improvement to separate them from the judgment. We let them work with the judgment; and they work safely, forming and perfecting the character, enlivening the truth and impressing it deeply, rendering our serious labors agreeable and efficient, making us love what we approve, and

act earnestly after we have chosen wisely. We believe that the more perfect we are, the more intense will be our pleasures of taste, and that the more we cultivate the heart, the more thoroughly it will pervade and influence our opinions and characters.

Our religion is certainly one of the great causes which have given to society that temperate, subdued character which is thought by some to be unfavorable to impassioned eloquence. And yet this religion constantly addresses the affections, not only as consisting perfectly with a sound mind, but as the very principles of our nature on which its moral provisions for human perfection and happiness are founded. It demands not the sacrifice of a single power, but that all should be cultivated to the utmost, and properly directed and balanced in order to our happiness. It sends neither fever nor lethargy to the heart, but sees men equally distant from their good, in the frenzy of savage passion and the hardened indifference of stoicism. It encourages the warmest sympathy, and the noblest and most persevering ambition. In offering its simplest precepts and sublimest promises, it has spared no language, or beauty, or imagery that could delight and refine our taste, and make our conception of its truths distinct and glowing. Take the Bible for its eloquence, appealing to all na-

tions and classes in every age,—its power is as universal as the sun. The form and tone of society may change, but you cannot so change the heart, that this eloquence will not reach it, and be a model and help for the orator who would reach it.

As another argument that the art has lost none of its dignity or honorable motives, and no worthy means of gaining a strong and wholesome influence over men,—I would mention the importance of character to all successful eloquence. It is his virtues, his consistency, his unquestioned sincerity that must get the orator attention and confidence now. He must not rely too much upon the zeal or even the soundness with which he treats a question under immediate discussion. His hearers must believe that his life is steadily influenced by the sentiments he is trying to impress on them,—that he is willing to abide by principle at any hazard, and give his opinions and professions the full authority of his actions. There are, indeed, accidents and artifices that may secure present success to the worst men; but it is the general effect of our improved society to give an influence to purity, firmness, and stability, on which every public speaker may rely for lasting consideration and weight.

It would not be going too far to say, that it is not in all the graces of address, or sweetness

and variety of tones, or beauty of illustration,—in all the outward and artificial accomplishments of the orator,—to equal or even approach the power conferred by a good character. Its still eloquence is felt in the commonest transactions of life. But it is in the administration of justice, in public deliberations upon the endangered interests of our country, and in the services that are to form us for this world and for heaven,—that we feel its majesty and purity in all their power, and receive strength from its presence. No festival eloquence will do then, no vain mockery of art, no treacherous allurements from a close and sober inspection of the truths upon which we are to act. We want then the orator who feels and acts with us; in whom we can confide even better than in ourselves; who is filled with our cause, and looks at it with solemnity and wisdom. We want then the orator who is unmoved by the reproaches or threats that alarm us; who walks over the injurious as over the dust, unconscious even that he tramples on them; who fears nothing on earth but a bad action, and regards no considerations but those of good principle.

You need not fill your imaginations with glorious forms of ideal perfection in the art;—only ask yourselves what must be the power of an orator who is perfectly fitted for an age like this; of one thoroughly prepared to do all that

eloquence can do among the enlightened and free, with subjects to kindle and sustain him, and an audience who can feel his character, his enthusiasm and wisdom. I would set no bounds to his power;—it is only for truth and freedom and justice to do it.

## GENERAL VIEW OF RHETORIC.

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RHETORIC has long had an ill name in the world, and curious would a full history of its fortunes be. The controversy of its merits has not sprung from the spirit of restlessness, scepticism and improvement in our own times; it began with our ancient masters, and has come down to us from them. It has been carried on by the ablest philosophers and critics, by the most experienced and eloquent orators, and by the most accomplished teachers. The controversy, moreover, has been one of no little moment; for among the questions on which it has turned, were some not less significant than these: — Shall the orator be instructed at all, or left to his instincts and exigencies? Shall he be specially instructed to be an orator, or left to gather what he can from the common course of liberal training? Shall not all education be involved in the preparation of an orator, and the rhetorician be the universal school-keeper? Will

the art, in its perfection, be likely to make men wiser judges in questions whether of private or public concern ?

It is sufficient for my present purpose to refer to the modern reputation of the art. The term, rhetorical, is in familiar use as descriptive of a certain character of style ; and what in general is this character ? Is it one that a writer or speaker is pleased to deserve and bear ? Does he feel that Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Campbell, and Whately are setting the seal to his merits ? These questions are readily answered. So far as common usage is concerned, to call a book or speech rhetorical is to say that it is distinguished for fallacies and tawdriness, or at best for a charm of manner. The word is one of reproach or of doubtful compliment. Logic has had better treatment, though not a little dreaded for its resistless force and its cunning devices. The logician must be answered. The rhetorician may be put aside as a showman, or, if seriously assailed, it will be for his alleged shameless practices upon the weak side of our nature. The sophist was once honorably known as the wise man and the teacher, and especially as a teacher of eloquence. In the course of time, and probably from some abuse of his opportunities of influence, he was held to be a cheat, and now the terms, sophist, sophism, and sophistry,



though of the best parentage, are fallen into irrecoverable disgrace. The case of the rhetorician is not so desperate as this; but he still thinks that he has reason to resent the general ignorance or disallowance of his fair claims. He complains that his art is rarely spoken of in a thoroughly creditable way but by those who teach or study it; and Archbishop Whately would have been glad, I think, of another title for his book, — so aware was he that the word, as he says, “suggests to most minds an associated idea of empty declamation or dishonest artifice.”\*

Believing that rhetoric is just as important to the faithful and efficient preparation of the severest argumentative discourse as of the most exciting appeal to the passions; that it has no more to do with grace and ornament than with clearness and precision; that style will be powerful so far as it is rhetorical, and, accordingly, that justice will be done to the thought in the degree that we conform to rhetorical principles; — I shall try to state what, as it seems to me, the art truly undertakes to teach and accomplish.

There is no dispute, I suppose, upon the point that rhetoric was originally intended to instruct men in the composition and delivery of orations. It was natural that a course of teaching for

\* Elements of Rhetoric, Preface.



these purposes should have been instituted among the ancient Greeks, in an age of civilization, literary tastes and mental activity, but not what we should call an age of books. Manuscripts were rare and costly; and as oral communication was of course an important means of public influence, it early became a branch of education. It may be asked, why was such an art provided for orators only. There were others who wrote and who spoke to crowds. The poet recited his verses, the historian his narratives, the rhapsodists repeated the divine strains of Homer, the philosopher delivered his lectures, and the player declaimed the all-popular drama. Why was not some system devised specially for these?

A general answer to the question is, that a thorough preparation for an orator,—that is, of one who is to deliver orations of whatever kind,—includes a large amount of instruction that will do equally well for every other class of speakers and writers, and, as respects some of them, the most important instruction they need. But to this general reply it may be added, that in regard to poetry and the drama, they are distinct arts of themselves, though in many points nearly allied to what we specially denominate oratory. Moreover, the rules of poetic and dramatic composition have been subjects of criticism and didactic treatises from

early times. And if we have no ancient books on poetical recitation and on playing, — I mean as to what is peculiar to these modes of speaking, — it may be owing to the small number of those who practised these arts, and also to the arts themselves being luxuries rather than, like oratory, almost necessary accomplishments in public and professional life and instruments of great popular sway. There can be no doubt that these luxurious arts of taste were, in ancient days, studied intensely in private by the few who were drawn to them by peculiar genius, and were made subjects of rules and of minute practice. The same may be said of music, painting and sculpture. But oratory, like architecture,\* was signally a useful as well as elegant and luxurious art, and it was to be cultivated by thousands, and no doubt by many who had little natural turn for it. It thus became a part of all liberal education, and at times seemed ready to monopolize it. We should not be surprised then, that rhetoric, as the art of the orator, occupies so prominent a place in ancient literature, or even that it should have been gradually recognized as the art of composition and delivery of whatever kind.

Without attempting a formal definition of the word, I am inclined to consider rhetoric, when

\* Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Introduction.

reduced to a system in books,\* as a body of rules derived from experience and observation, extending to all communication by language and designed to make it efficient. It does not ask whether a man is to be a speaker or writer, — a poet, philosopher, or debater ; but simply, — is it his wish to be put in the right way of communicating his mind with power to others, by words spoken or written. If so, rhetoric undertakes to show him rules or principles which will help to make the expression of his thoughts effective ; and effective, not in any fashionable or arbitrary way, but in the way that nature

\* The teacher, whose purpose is to pass beyond the external and practical bearings of rhetoric as an art, — that is, to consider it not merely in its manifestations, but also in its principles as a science, — will have to speak of the imagination and the passions as giving a tone and character to human speech, which are discernible both in the significance of single words and in the order which they naturally fall into. The faculty of taste, also, must be introduced as the great moderating or tempering power, that wars against excess, against false associations of images and the unbecoming intrusion of startling but disturbing ideas, and which, in these ways and by positive suggestion of true and apposite beauty, keeps down all unnatural vivacity and gives proper brightness to the genuine. These points, — not to name others equally fundamental, — come properly within the province of an instructor who would treat fully and scientifically his whole subject ; but rhetoricians have commonly left them in charge of writers on mental philosophy, and satisfied themselves with insisting upon propriety of expression, without giving prominence to the principles of which it is but the result. How much this branch of education loses, by such neglect, in weight and dignity, may be worth considering.

universally intends, and which man universally feels. For all genuine art is but the helpmate of nature.

In thus extending rhetoric beyond the supervision of orators and speeches, it will probably be found that the orator himself has gained something by the extension; that he is better prepared for his vocation than he would be by studying rhetoric with special reference to public speaking. He will probably be better grounded in principles. Let us consider the theory in one or two particulars.

One of the offices of rhetoric is, to analyze and explain the style or method of persuasive address,—that method which nature dictates when our object is to move the passions, or to direct them, and thus to control the will; for such is the aim of oratorical persuasion. Now some contend that rhetoric should treat of persuasion in reference to orations only. The pupil must keep forever in sight an assembly of men who are about to vote and act upon some immediate question or occasion, and whom he is to try to influence. This limitation seems to be arbitrary and unwise. It seems to be arbitrary, because the very oration that is to persuade appeals to the same principles of man's nature which any other affecting composition or speaking must depend upon; and, in the main, the character and qualities of all such appeals will be essen-

tially the same. The emotion of pity or fear or indignation, is precisely the same in its nature, whether it be raised by the orator or the poet, and whether the purpose be to make men act in a certain way in an assembly, or to move and purify the heart in their solitary reading. Persuasion would arouse, impel, deter, invite;—inspire admiration, abhorrence, terror, delight, reverence. How is this to be done? Plainly, by appeals to a man's imagination and taste,—to his sense of beauty and grandeur and moral excellence,—to his sense of wit and humor and irony and satire. These are among the orator's means of persuasion. And surely the written book, the novel, the history, the fable and the acted play make their approaches to the heart in the same direction and by use of the same methods. I cannot then see how a liberal and philosophical rhetoric can overlook any form of composition, any use of language that aims at power over the heart. I should much sooner expect to see it transgress the limits which the most liberal would think it proper to establish, and carry the student to the galleries of painting and sculpture and to the finest performances in music, that he might see how much there was held in common by all the elegant arts.

And it is because of this community among these arts that I think the limitation, before spoken of, unwise. The only reason for making

any course of teaching exclusive is, that the pupil may be made more perfect; and this will be the effect, if we shut out nothing but what interferes with his successful prosecution of a study. But what shall we call an interfering study? Certainly not one which involves the same principles with his main pursuit. No doubt, if the student of eloquence were limited to those forms and methods of persuasion which he finds in speeches, he would discover there all or most of the principles and modes of persuasion which are of use anywhere. But this is not the point. What we contend for is, that *he* will have the completest mastery of the principles and the practice who has studied and felt them in their whole application and bearing;—that a man's power of affecting others will be less, if he has not acquainted himself with the modes in which other artists exercise that power, with the resources they employ, with their varieties of style, and even with the faintest differences that may naturally exist between the manner of a writer and a speaker, though they be of equal and kindred genius and aim at a kindred influence. The orator's art is not a mechanical trade, which is learned the most perfectly by exclusive devotion to its details; but it is one, and only one, of the results of a grand action of many powers; it is one child of the prolific mother of many arts, which have a common principle or character of



perfection, and which never fail to help each other. When the orator, then, is analyzing persuasion, let him study it in all its connections. So far from finding this course an interfering one, he will be better prepared for his special work.

And further, such a liberal examination of the subject is recommended because it may save him from a false and dangerous estimate of one of his most important means of influence. By his frequent use of persuasive address in the course of professional business, he might be led to regard it as a somewhat vulgar instrument, to be taken up and wielded as a matter of course, when he comes to certain places in his harangue, rather than as a means of high moral power over the will;—to look upon it as a weak point in men, that they are impressible and yielding, and so ready to be moulded to the purposes of another; while he ought to feel that, with poets and minstrels and prophets, he is permitted to approach with sovereign control the sacred and generous fountains of the heart.

Another office of rhetoric is, to instruct a man in finding and arranging the arguments, the reasons, the proofs by which he is to maintain his great, leading proposition. If we could make people believe, with Dr. Whately,\* that rhetoric, properly so called, was principally concerned

\* Elements of Rhetoric, Part I., Chap. 2.

with this business, that its peculiar vocation was to furnish proofs and work conviction, probably the general ill opinion of the art, before alluded to, would be lessened. There is something so cool, manly and respectable in convincing, in addressing one's-self to the pure, clear reason or judgment, that we are disposed to honor whatever has an agency in it, and to forget that fallacy in presenting our proofs is nearly if not quite as easy, insinuating and perhaps mischievous as those dreaded sophistries of ornament or of passion which fascinate the unthinking and sweep away multitudes as with a torrent's force. As it is true, however, that rhetoric deals as much with arguments as with any other materials of discourse, let us get all the credit and favor we can for it by insisting on this fact.

Suppose now, that rhetoric, in the severest construction of its functions, should refuse to prepare the pupil in respect to his arguments, except so far as concerns a discourse that is to be spoken, and should perpetually and exclusively remind him of a legal tribunal or a legislative assembly. He might be slow to learn that the most important elements and characteristics of argumentative composition belong equally to all argumentative works, and that the least important things are the distinctions that separate one class of these from others. Yet so true is this, that you could not teach him the proper way of



collecting and stating his arguments for a sermon, a debate, or a philosophical treatise, without teaching him nearly everything that belonged to this matter universally. There is a fundamental instruction for all cases, of infinitely more account than the special directions for particular classes of writers or speakers. But though it is of consequence to save the learner from the false and narrowing notion, that what is most important in any one kind of argumentative composition is peculiar to it, yet he must not be ignorant of what *is* peculiar to each, and a little study and experience will soon inform him.

There is one point relative to the argumentative part of a speech which deserves consideration. Men are very apt to speak of argument and persuasion as two entirely distinct, if not hostile methods of address. As they evidently mean here, by the word argument, both the mustering and marshalling of propositions,—which is the business of rhetoric,—and reasoning from them, which belongs to logic,—we may, for the occasion, use it in the same vague way. What, then, is meant by the alleged distinction? We hear frequently that argument addresses the understanding and persuasion the passions; and that reason or the judgment is proverbially prudent and safe, while the passions are as proverbially headlong and dangerous. But how should

such poor commonplaces as these, reach and explain the phenomena and the actual results of eloquence? The popular language is, that argument is characterized by coolness and deliberation. Yet, how various is its character. Sometimes it is incorporated with persuasion, so that no separate appeal to the feelings is required. Sometimes the subject-matter is such throughout, that the arguments adduced in proof are necessarily of the most popular and exciting description. They are ardent and even fierce and overwhelming. Topic follows topic, proof is heaped on proof, till we are reminded of Milton's 'piled thunder.' We seem to be in the midst of fiery shafts and grand peals, with the reason as clear as the brave eye in storms and peril, and with conviction as seated as the rock.

On the other hand, persuasion is said to be heated and reckless, and bent upon setting people above or beyond reason, so that they may be ruled by impulse. Yet persuasion has its proper topics and method, not less than the coolest addresses to the understanding, and is, for the most part, a brief and informal kind of reasoning. This siren or this fury is very often reason herself, kindled and inspired. Persuasion has, indeed, little appearance of proving and convincing; but this is so, probably, because feeling makes perception so rapid that steps and pro-

cesses are not recognized. The heart leaps over the space required for full, formal statements, whether of proofs or reasonings, and feels all their force without stopping for them. It is not meant by these remarks to confound argument and persuasion, but to make peace between them; to show that they may and do act together with excellent effect, while in bad hands both may be equally harmful.

A third office of rhetoric is, to give instruction in speaking; and here, too, the instruction should be general. Not only orations, but all departments of literature may properly contribute passages for the exercises, since the object is not to form a particular and habitual style of elocution, but to obtain a mastery of all its principles to serve any occasion. The aim of liberal education, in general, is not to fit a man for a particular calling and refer his studies solely or chiefly to that, but to give him a ready command of all faculties and strengthen them to the utmost; so that he shall come to his profession with a general invigoration and flexibility which prepare him for the study of any. He is left to adapt himself to a vocation or exigency according to its demand. Apply this doctrine to speaking. If the pupil were taught exclusively with reference to an oration, a play, a parliamentary debate, &c., the direction and extent of his natural force would be hurtfully limited.

He would have the mechanical air of one who had learned but a single thing and had been practising it all his life; and more time would be occupied, though the object is so distinctly bounded, than the most thorough general instruction in rhetoric would require. It is better, therefore, on every ground, that speaking should not be taught with reference to occasions or particular compositions; or, at any rate, that the special instruction should be a secondary matter.

The last office of rhetoric is, to teach the principles of composition, or, generally, of a good style, in the popular sense of that phrase.\* This, as I apprehend the subject, brings properly under the cognizance of rhetoric the whole use of language considered as a means of powerful expression. By this more is implied than grammatical and logical propriety. It comprehends the selection of efficient words, and a forcible, impressive arrangement.

As I may appear to have been somewhat

\* The word *style* is not used here to denote a writer's peculiar manner, arising from and expressing the original character of his mind. This, of course, is not within the province of the rhetorician. As a teacher, I aimed no higher than to instruct beginners in principles of composition which are common to all writers, whatever their style may be; and such instruction is better given in familiar text-books and in private exercises, than in a course of public lectures. Accordingly, it filled but a small place in mine.

latitudinarian in my former remarks, and to have given more work to a single art than any one art can or ought to do, I am happy that in respect to style I am justified in setting up and observing a limitation, which has been too often overstepped. — And I may say here, once for all, that I should not have represented rhetoric as so comprehensive an art as I have done, if, in any philosophical view of it, I had not felt unable to do less, or if I could have found any other art, with whatever name or pretensions, which could properly take part of the burden upon itself. — The limitation just referred to is intended to guard you against supposing that because rhetoric treats of style in a wide literary sense of the term, it should also give a general criticism of literature. It has nothing to do with the different departments of the Belles Lettres, as so many distinct forms of writing. It has nothing to do with an analysis of poetry, history, fiction, biography, the drama, &c., or with their laws or their beauties. It leaves this whole field of criticism to other laborers, and limits its inspection of general literature to the purpose of ascertaining and illustrating the essentials of accurate and forcible expression in all good composition.

Upon this general view of rhetoric, it seems to be strictly an instrumental art. It creates nothing, and, in one sense, bestows nothing. It

takes man with a supposed natural capacity for eloquence, with a language already provided, and the practice of eloquence already existing. Its work is, guidance, direction, and farther development; to lead men to observe closely the principles of that excellence which they already acknowledge; in a word, to bring into system the natural practice of all men, the processes we go through and the means we employ when we express ourselves well. Yet this is the art which so many think to be showy, presumptuous, and deceptive. Let us give a moment's attention to some of the objections which have been brought against it, and which were very generally alluded to at the beginning of the lecture.

The objection that it is an arbitrary device of sophists to *make* men orators, to create in them the power by giving rules, is sufficiently answered by the remarks (perhaps some will say, the concessions) just made. I will only add that rhetoric is no more invented by man, and no more pretends to make eloquence or eloquent men, than induction was invented by Bacon, and, with the help of a teacher, pretends to make philosophers.

Another objection is, that rhetoric undertakes to make men orators by offering one and the same prescription for all, and is thus carrying on secret warfare against individual genius. With equal propriety might it be said that one lan-

guage for a whole people is hostile to the exercise and manifestation of peculiar genius. Rhetoric takes no note of differences in men, either to supply an absolute want of power or to counteract a strong original tendency, but regards only those practices which all unconsciously follow when they speak or write well, be they men of gifted minds or not, and leaves to every one the full, free use of his peculiar resources to effect his purpose. Hence it is, that some great triumph of eloquence or some admirable book may appear to be so decidedly the result of something wholly peculiar in the individual, that the cry will be: ‘There is a man who works miracles without aid from the magicians; there is the sheer product of strong native genius.’ Yet, to acute observers, he will exhibit throughout his mastery of the universal principles of rhetoric. He could not have triumphed without it. He might as well have triumphed without the use of language.

But as soon as we have made this statement of the case, the question is raised: If rhetoric teaches nothing but what is already practised without it, why have it at all? A *useful* art instructs us to apply power in some profitable way that we had not known; but here is an art that simply tells us what we have done and can do without it. To answer the objection satisfactorily would lead us into an inquiry respect-



ing the utility of art, or the cultivation of acknowledged natural powers and the perfecting of acknowledged natural operations. This opens a large field of remark and illustration, and the subject, though involving points already touched upon, will require a separate consideration.

The opinion that the art is of no good practical use has probably led to the popular notion that it must serve a mischievous one. Why was it contrived if it was to accomplish nothing? It cannot be a merely speculative view, however curious and interesting, of certain mental actions, modes of speech, vocal inflections and bodily expressions. It cannot be merely inoperative; for we see it ally itself to a splendid and powerful means of influence;—it professes to be and is received as the companion and auxiliary of orators and writers. From these, and perhaps other considerations, rhetoric has been supposed to be a device of sophists to furnish an apparatus for carrying any cause that could not sustain itself,—an art that teaches how the instrument of communicating thought may be successfully abused, and the semblance of truth and sincerity be perfectly put on. And it cannot be denied that the pedantry, the frivolous minuteness and the petty subtilties of some systems and teachers have done much to countenance distrust at least, if not so rude a condemnation. Abuses are apt to seize the sharpest upon the best means of



serving the world ; and signally so, when the true uses and objects of these means are not thoroughly understood by the many. And, in general, people are not so ready to discern the beneficent ministry of rhetoric when a good cause is ably sustained, as to suspect its insidious agency when a bad one is triumphant, and the worse is made to appear the better reason.

Let us trust that in good time our art will be more justly appreciated, as surely as its evils and its vain pretensions will be lessened by the wider prevalence of enlightened opinions on other subjects. It will then be welcomed as the humble assistant of nature and friend of truth.

## ELOCUTION, A STUDY.

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It is still a matter in controversy, whether it is not more a harm than an assistance to an orator to make speaking a part of his education. Those who would dispense altogether with teaching it, seeing, as we all see, that a great deal of the ancient discipline is ill-suited to modern tastes and demands, and believing that every method and practice of later elocutionists has failed, are inclined to trust to a man's natural power of expression whenever he is earnestly bent upon carrying his point. They find a cure for every evil, and a supply for every want, in sincerity and devotedness. Their great rule is, 'trust to nature.' Let us first consider this very attractive precept.

The meaning is clear enough. We have by our constitution an apparatus for sounds and bodily movements, universally significant of mental states and action, and sure to operate immediately and infallibly unless we clog it.

The fault is ours if the machinery does not work well. One mode of obstructing it, we are told, is studying to speak well; for it supposes that natural impulse is insufficient, that the ear is an inadequate judge of sounds, that the fullest possession of the meaning of what we want to utter with effect is not enough to dictate spontaneously the appropriate manner of expression. Hence, in our distrust of nature, we try, as the next best thing, to imitate her, and with the success that might be expected. A consciousness of self forever prevents the full, lively manifestation of self. The exterior is no longer informed by the spiritual. A strictly artificial accomplishment, drawing attention to itself, becomes the crowning glory of the orator, while the prevailing style of his delivery is monotonous and wearisome.

The advocates of an entire trust in nature sometimes direct us to children as examples of its excellent effect. In them we have the genuine disciples of nature,—the natural orator in the truest sense. The boy is not yet infected with affectation, or hypocrisy, or vanity, or anxiety about his appearance, or consciousness of effort. He has something to communicate; and he seeks some way to utter it, as instinctively as the body moves under the excitement of the briskly flowing blood and the delightful sensation of new and healthy life. How in-

telligible is every gesture, look and attitude which waits upon his imperfect speech or interprets his silence. Every feeling, wish and thought has its messenger. No actor, no pantomime of elder growth is to be compared with him. They should study him; so should the painter,—so should the sculptor. He is one visible mental expression. And all because he is full of the matter and has nature to help him out in the utterance. In this we are all agreed.

Now as the quality of good eloquence is the same in young and old, what needs the mature speaker but the same surrender of himself to his subject, and the same wish and purpose to impress his hearer? If we are no longer successful speakers as we advance in years, it must be because we are sophisticated. We have lost the early inspiration; and instead of recovering it by going back to our youthful ardor and sincerity, we vainly strive to make up for it by art or imitation.

There is much clear truth in this view; but, as we think, there is also an important error; and to detect and expose it shall occupy us for the present. Let us inquire what this so much reprobated art or teaching is; and what nature would, in general, be without it.

Many have a vague notion of art as opposed to or above nature; or at least as something very distinct from it. But in our present use

of the term,—in the sense of a means or instrument,—art is drawn directly from all that we have learned of the perfect in man's nature, and is intended to develope and train what he already possesses. It is an experiment upon human power to know how far it may be extended and what direction it needs. And, whether he knows it or not, every man, in his particular calling, is subjected to this experiment. He either tries it upon himself or others try it for him. He is a pupil, more or less docile, of somebody. This is a necessity of his constitution and condition. There can be no qualification or dispensation to suit the faculties, tastes or pursuits of any man. The very prodigies of genius, who seem to us short-sighted worshippers to find their way upward like the plant,—if they had the power to reveal the mystery of their growth, would probably show us a far more thorough course of education, a more strict though, perhaps, unconscious obedience to principles, than the most dependent of their brethren have ever been subjected to. The poet is called emphatically the child of nature. He is born to his vocation. Still he is and must be in the strictest sense a pupil of art, as in his triumph he is a master. To speak only of versification,—I admit that there is such a thing as a natural ear for melody; but I must go far beyond this simple perception and pleasure to account for

all the received varieties of verse ; its complication, its refinement, and power of endless adaptation. Sound is studied by the poet, till its hidden capacity of expression is understood,—till verse in its most finished state becomes a full exhibition of an inborn faculty, and serves to illuminate both thought and passion, however various or subtle.

What should exempt the voice from the necessity imposed upon our powers generally ? It is certainly capable of being affected in some way by experience or practice. It is not too aërial to be controlled and harmed by ourselves and by others. The proper view of it seems to be that nature gives her early lesson where no other can teach, and indicates that there is much in reserve which we ourselves must bring to light for the noblest services of speech. The natural voice, in order that its full compass of expression may be known, and that it may be capable of giving the best utterance, needs cultivation, vigilant study and many experiments. No matter how great may be a man's natural gift, or whether his practice is the analysis and trial of vocal sounds, or an exercise at school, or solitary declamation in forests or on the seabeach, or whether he studies the manner of other speakers as a means of discovering and improving his own faculty ;—be the discipline what it may, so far forth as he is a good speaker,

he has followed the true principles of rhetoric. Call him a natural or taught orator, it is all substantially the same, however true it may be that the few who can do nearly everything for themselves are greater men than the thousand who need help from others. Profiting by a wise education is trusting to nature, in the only common-sense interpretation of the words. We then acknowledge her secret forces and try to give her full play.

Besides, the importance of education is seen in another view of facts. Many have but little of the element of eloquence from nature. Many have great deficiencies associated with their native gifts; such as infirmities of temperament and ill-directed or corrupted taste. Instead of instinctively developing the divine faculty, they do all they can to thwart and obstruct it, till at last vicious habits shut it from their sight and make another discovery of it next to impracticable. Probably the most confident disciples of nature would not refuse the offices of education in cases like these. It would be mockery to tell such persons to trust to nature when she has done so little to inspire confidence, and they have done what they could to weaken her energies.

No doubt there are bad systems of elocution, false teachers, many abuses, many cases where nature has sunk under the instruction. So it is



with everything that is the care and work of man. I admit that art, instead of being instrumental, as it should be, and wholly merged and lost in the power which it has served to bring out and perfect, is too apt to survive and betray itself; and that its appearance is especially hurtful and offensive in a public speaker, in whom the signs of preparation, so far at least as the manner is concerned, are apt to raise a suspicion that all is not sincere. But I cannot say that I discover the brand upon him more than upon others who have systematically followed any business or study. As it is only an unhappy accident and no necessary result of instruction, it is no argument against the use and necessity of instruction.

Let us now return to our infant orator, whom we left in the full glow and triumph of extemporaneous eloquence. What a revolution has been going on since we parted with him. Well may he say with the apostle, 'When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things.' The joyous state of being is gone, when the outward, the material, the present had the mastery. The age of reflection, anticipation, comparison and reasoning has succeeded. The inward and abstract are patiently studied. A sense of responsibility, both for opinion and conduct, begins to be felt. It is

found politic or necessary to repress emotion and to set a guard over the tongue. The more a habit is formed of revolving thoughts and ascertaining difficult truth, the less eager are we to make instant proclamation of feelings and ideas. Reserve if not shyness, pride if not distrust, has succeeded to the free, reckless, confiding spirit of boyhood. The more matured the mind becomes, the more capable of perceiving things accurately and comprehensively, and the more it feels their importance, the less heed it takes of its mode of expressing them. It confides in their intrinsic value to recommend, and in the good sense of others to understand them. The young man has undergone all these intellectual and moral changes, and many more, and in these respects, at least, has been treated as a proper subject of education; and all the time the power of eloquence, the instinctive and perfect discriminations of the voice have most probably been diminishing, and not a step been taken by himself or others to keep up or form a style of expression at all commensurate with the growth and revolutions of his mind and character. The giant is full-sized indeed, but a bond is upon him, which has yielded so far as not to hinder his growth, but will not suffer him to move with his early freedom.

Here, then, is a subject in pressing need of help of some kind. It will never do to say to him,

— you will speak well enough if you are but let alone or will let yourself alone. Our untaught speakers, in the enjoyment of boundless liberty in this respect, are an ever present answer to such a doctrine. What, then, shall be done? The point, unfortunately, is still in dispute.

Among those who reject every theory and practice of the masters, whether for development or correction, is Archbishop Whately, in his well-known views of elocution.\* Seeing in the old systems and teachers no good fruit and much evil, he has suggested, as an all-sufficient remedy for the deficiencies of orators, a simple return to nature by an entire surrender of ourselves to our work, to our meaning and to the occasion. We may then ‘trust to her to suggest spontaneously the proper emphases and tones.’ This idea he carries out at length and with care. He may not prevail with us to give up our teachers; but if they would study his principles, they would better deserve our confidence. Let his theory or remedy be worth what it may, no man, probably, has ever formed a juster conception of the *natural* speaker, or of the faults of the *assumed* manner. No man has better understood the relations in which the orator and his audience stand to each other.

The point for which I have been contending

\* Elements of Rhetoric, Part IV.

is, that we are to give nature free room for making her spontaneous suggestions, by doing our own part of the work; and that is by making what we think natural and necessary experiments upon her power, by cherishing even the slightest monitions she may give us, and by removing the obstructions to her exercise which are perpetually placed in her way by wrong teaching, negligence, imitation, and tricks and bad habits of all kinds, acquired from exposures not to be numbered.

Dr. Whately seems to think that a man instructed in elocution will necessarily have his rules occur to him for guidance at the moment of speaking, and that these, by reminding him of himself, will defeat the natural manner. This remark cannot apply to any part of the brief view we have taken of his education. The natural effect of our plan would be to make him think nothing of himself, of his voice, or of any rule. He has been employed in perfecting an instrument that will now obey the slightest touch. The passions may play freely upon it. He has been forming good habits and may trust fearlessly to their guidance. He has cultivated his task till he feels a general confidence in its exactness. He is fully equipped and trained, and has nothing to do but act and put forth all his might. It is a consciousness of weakness or unpreparedness that betrays a conscious manner.

This writer's objections to teaching indicate that he is generally if not always thinking of a man's reading and speaking, as it were, *by note*; that is, with reference to marks upon his manuscript, or to some devices which he has committed to memory for the occasion. Fatal as such a practice may be, it has no connection with the most diligent and minute cultivation of the voice for the purpose of fitting it to do its whole office, — not for any particular emergency, but for whatever demand may be made upon it through a long life.\*

It is possible after all, that Dr. Whately would countenance our idea of the orator's education; for early in his discussion he says: 'When I protest against all artificial systems of elocution, and all *direct* attention to delivery, *at the time*, it must not be supposed that a *general* inattention to that point is recommended.' Near the close, too, he says, that any one who has a faulty delivery, — faults of utterance, attitude and gesture, — should endeavor to remedy the defect by care and by availing himself of the remarks of an intelligent friend. It is true that he makes these admissions with caution, as if careless readers might attach undue importance to them; but we are willing to hope that, unawares, we

\* In the course of my remarks, the *voice* alone has been referred to, among the instruments of eloquence, as it was sufficient for the purpose of illustration.

have been occupied in carrying out one part, at least, of his views. And if we could here state in detail what course of instruction we should recommend for pupils generally, it probably would not transcend the liberty which we think is given us by this eminent rhetorician in the passages just referred to, nor be thought by him to endanger the natural manner.

Perhaps nothing makes education more important to the orator than the ardor, sincerity and devotion to his purpose, on which Dr. Whately would rely as all-sufficient. He cannot be truly eloquent without these ; but they must be trained to his service if he would obtain something more than a few brilliant triumphs, — if he would have a useful, steady, confirmed power. We are not wrong in thinking the delivery natural whenever it is spontaneous ; but it may not be natural in the highest sense. The want of some native gift, or of discretion and skill may perpetually betray itself to harm or defeat an effort that was full of promise. Most of us, probably, have heard men speak who evidently had many of the essentials of eloquence ; who were full of the matter, enthusiastic, and determined to convince or persuade ; but whose fervor and very success betrayed them into exaggeration. This might do no harm in a single instance ; it might help the cause. Their reputation and influence may not suffer for a time. But a faulty manner is



generated, and the fault will have the credit of no small part of the impression made. Constant practice before assemblies, — which ought to perfect the oratorical talent, — constant recurrence to some great secret of former success, serves, in their case, but to make bad habits inveterate and more and more prominent. If they feel themselves losing ground as orators, their manner becomes more violent, till they are beyond endurance, unless sustained by their great general ability.

The question may be asked, whether a common man, the least educated in any respect, ever fails to hit instinctively the true, thrilling tone, whenever he is deeply moved. Does his rage, his remorse, his agony of grief, need a teacher of vocal inflections? No, — but shall the frantic man come to our assemblies? Will the raw, naked passion, true as it is in expressing itself, appeal fitly to cultivated minds, preparing themselves by deliberation not less than by sympathy for just judgment and action? Without deducting a jot of sincerity from the passion or of nature from the tone, we know that something must be done for them before they can be admitted to the orator's service. This violence would not do even on the stage. How truly, how beautifully has Shakspeare instructed, not the actor only, but the speaker. How exactly has he discerned what the refined ear and taste



demand. ‘Use all gently: for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance, that may give it smoothness.’\*

Thus the most sincere passion needs the restraint of taste, and the moderation, the serenity of self-possession. Just as some men, who feel deeply what they want to say, speak as if they were unmoved, — others, equally sincere, fail from over-doing.’

\* ‘What noble propriety and grace do we feel in the conduct of those who, in their own case, exert that recollection and self-command which constitute the dignity of every passion, and which bring it down to what others can enter into. We are disgusted with that clamorous grief, which, without any delicacy, calls upon our compassion with sighs and tears and importunate lamentations. But we reverence that reserved, that silent and majestic sorrow, which discovers itself only in the swelling of the eyes, in the quivering of the lips and cheeks, and in the distant but affecting coldness of the whole behavior. It imposes the like silence upon us. We regard it with respectful attention, and watch with anxious concern over our whole behavior, lest by any impropriety we should disturb that concerted tranquillity, which it requires so great an effort to support.’ — *Smith’s Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I. 45.

## DEMONSTRATIVE ORATORY.

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ONE characteristic of a parliamentary debate and of an argument in a court of justice is, that the speech relates to matters of present business, such as men are not only to form an opinion but forthwith to act upon. The case is different with respect to a demonstrative oration ; for this is not properly connected with decisions or action. It is intended to please. It may exercise no small moral and intellectual influence ; but it proposes to itself no special practical result.

The word, demonstrative, sounds strangely to modern ears when applied to eloquence, though perfectly familiar as expressive of scientific proof. The rhetoricians, not less than the mathematicians, mean by it, *showing* ; but not in the same way, and not, necessarily, with the same degree of certainty. The demonstrative oration sets forth or exhibits whatever may be its object, and addresses itself to opinion, taste and feeling. Its proper business, according to our

ancient masters, is the praise or dispraise of persons and things ; in other words, panegyric or invective. It formed one of the three grand divisions of their eloquence, and was thought of sufficient importance to have special instruction provided for a suitable preparation of the discourse.

In modern times, there are many public addresses which fully answer to the ancient idea of demonstrative eloquence, and many occasions when it is introduced incidentally. It is not seldom that we assemble to hear some great event or great name in history commemorated ; and the opportunity is not lost of inveighing against public foes, or the domestic factions which we have not joined. Every funeral discourse is as properly a demonstrative oration as the panegyrics of classic celebrity.

What are we to think of a department of eloquence for the praise of the living ? Surely, it cannot be countenanced in highly civilized life. It must belong to barbarism. No ; — the savage is probably too simple for such a worship. Then it must be intended to adorn the servile homage of the ignorant and corrupt in more refined society, who would propitiate a despot. Not exclusively ; for the most bare-faced praise ever offered to man holds a distinguished place in the eloquence of the most free, cultivated and sober-minded nations from the great ages of

antiquity to our own ; and the orators, the incense-bearers, have been among the eminent of their time, and in their turn have received like adoration. How it is that we say things of a man to his face, before a throng, which we could not repeat to him seriously in private, may be explained as we explain other conventional ceremonies. But the wonder is that such forms do not yield to the good sense which has corrected other but not grosser follies of fashion.

Panegyrics of the dead are clear of such grounds of reproach. Indeed, the custom has a somewhat different object, since the eulogy of the living is intended for the credit and advantage of both parties, but panegyrics of the departed can be designed for none but ourselves. We owe a debt to deceased benefactors ; and we pay it in the only ways we can ; sometimes by imitating them and carrying out their work ; sometimes by monuments and praise. Even without regard to the benefit we may have received, we feel that it would bring discredit upon us not to show publicly our sense of greatness and excellence. And further, such panegyrics are occasions for the relief of public sorrow. For nations, as well as villages and families, have their common grief in the loss of great or good men, and the same mode of assuaging it by dwelling on their memory.

Communities, whether large or small, are bound together not more by the living than by the dead.

The common faults of eulogies are familiar to all, and are easily traced to a few simple causes.

Family pride, in its demands for public admiration of ancestors, oversteps the line of moderation and delicacy. It is impatient of bare truth. It thinks too much of survivors, and betrays an unbecoming dependence on inherited glory. Cicero says that it had been customary for families to preserve memoirs to adorn a funeral, when any of the race died, and that 'the truth of history was corrupted by them.'\* This is a grave charge, indeed, and naturally puts readers, as it should relatives, upon their guard in the matter of family history. How many of us are almost compelled to receive our impressions of distinguished persons from biographers whom a very natural family pride has perverted. Add to this bias that of family love,—both equally prone to exaggerate their objects whether living or dead,—and we cannot be surprised that truth should suffer in such hands.

So it will be if we pass from relatives to friends and dependents; to faithful fellow-combatants with the deceased in political struggles,

\* De Claris Oratoribus, Cap. 16.

and fellow-sufferers with him in their fallen fortunes, — all of them deeply moved, all perfectly competent to show us what power a great man had gained over them; and, for these very reasons, uncertain witnesses to his life and character as a whole.

Next we come to those who appear perfectly unexceptionable and safe as reporters; and if they fail, there must be some vice in the custom itself. The eulogist may have no personal or special interest in his subject, but is called upon as a prominent man to prepare a discourse, as his part of a great public duty. What prudence and judgment are necessary to save him from forced extravagances, when he assumes to be the representative of the general admiration and sympathy. ‘To praise often,’ says the critic, ‘whether there is ground for it or not, but at any rate to over-praise, and to suppress on all occasions the opposite side of the account, is the besetting sin of such discourses.’\* If genuine grief may be frantic, the assumed may be hyperbolic. Estimates of character, praises of genius, reviews of public services, which might be impressive if simple and just, are very likely, on such occasions, to be disfigured by elaborate analysis and brilliant contrasts, or by the pompous swell of generalities. Such are some of the perils of praise, whether bursting

\* Edinb. Rev. No. xlvi. p. 353.

from the heart, or struck out from the intellect in obedience to a vote.

I might here recall to you the oft-enumerated specimens of demonstrative eloquence in the ancient states and in France, and the no less memorable instances of its introduction in the course of a debate, or of an argument at the bar, in England. But I must proceed to other matters.

We are considering a department of eloquence which belongs to no profession, or, perhaps more properly, which has made none for itself. We have orators for the houses of legislation, for the court-room, and for the pulpit; and the two last classes of speakers form distinct professions. But demonstrative orations are little more than occasional exercises, sometimes performed by those who are public speakers by their professions, or by men devoted to literature or to business. We may conceive of a state of society so refined, and, perhaps I may add, so luxurious, as to call forth and establish a class of what may be called literary orators, as distinct and acknowledged as that of authors, whose vocation it will be to investigate literary, moral and scientific subjects, or the elegant arts, and make them familiar and agreeable to multitudes in public discourses.

It would be doing no violence to demonstrative oratory to bring these within its province. So



far as the lectures of the ancient philosophers were exoteric, they also might have a place here, with Socrates, perhaps, to countenance the classification. Or if a later authority be demanded, we have one in Milton. This stern public censor, at the very moment that he was contending against king and prelate and the many corruptions and oppressions which had brought England to the hour of her terrible convulsion, could raise his voice in behalf of such means of popular improvement as we have now in our minds. Music and plays were already proscribed, but the Puritan's substitute would not be out of place in our days. In his 'Reason of Church Government,' he says :

‘Because the spirit of man cannot demean itself lively in this body, without some recreating intermission of labor and serious things, it were happy for the Commonwealth if our magistrates, as in those famous governments of old, would take into their care the managing of our public sports and festival pastimes, that they might be such as may civilize, adorn and make discreet our minds by the learned and affable meeting of frequent academies, and the procurement of wise and artful recitations, sweetened with eloquent and graceful enticements to the love and practice of justice, temperance and fortitude, instructing and bettering the nation at all opportunities, that the call of wisdom and virtue may be heard

every where. Whether this may not be, not only in pulpits, but after another persuasive method, at set and solemn panegyries, in theatres, porches, or what other place or way may win most upon the people, to receive at once both recreation and instruction, let them in authority consult.'\*

It is on ground as broad as Milton has here taken in recommending a refining popular culture, a wisdom and an entertainment for a whole people, that demonstrative oratory may be well worthy of consideration and support at this time among ourselves. Our courses of public lectures in town and country accord very well with his idea; and though once a doubtful experiment, they are now regarded as a means of supplying a general want. Their uses are obvious. In a social view, the mere bringing people together to have their minds refreshed by truth and their tastes gratified by simple, intellectual pleasures, is of itself civilizing. It is a very favorable sign of the times, that audiences can be collected evening after evening with no livelier temptation.

The purpose of such lectures cannot be to furnish a great amount of exact knowledge which will be retained and used like that which we amass in our private studies. Their

\* I have taken those parts only of the passage which relate to our subject.

object, I suppose, is partly to hold a sort of conversation with men upon what they are already to some extent acquainted with, in order that they may compare their ideas with those of a fellow-inquirer, and be assisted to take comprehensive views of subjects which they had examined by themselves very much in detail. Generally, no doubt, the effect is to stimulate those who are in the habit of thinking and inquiring, to wake up the less intellectual, and to make whole communities feel that they have other matters of common interest than the affairs of their towns and families.

The demonstrative orator is soon made aware of the peculiar difficulties of his position. Though he has not the burden that weighs on professional speakers, yet he has not the excitement of their responsibility. Though his subject be an easy one for all parties, yet it is not felt to be of pressing importance. Though he is at liberty to manage it as he pleases, in the absence of opponents and controlling judges, yet the animation of controversy is wanting.

The orator who is to commemorate the recent dead, or any late event of great public interest, will suffer little from considerations of this nature. And he who is called on to speak of a long-past era, may often be at liberty to connect existing affairs and opinions with the venerable subject of present commemoration,

and thus make it almost as animating as if it were new. For example, — during the two centuries since the Restoration, there have been many periods, no doubt, when an English clergyman might preach before a tory audience a very exciting discourse, on the thirtieth of January, in celebration of the martyrdom, as it was called, of Charles the First, because his hearers, while they mourned over the royal sorrows and humiliation, would be freshly reminded of the reëstablishment of kingly and ecclesiastical power, and kindled anew with the fires of ancient loyalty and of political hate.

Our Fourth of July celebrations must always give a fair occasion to discuss soberly the comfort of having a country of our own, with a government of our own, in connection with the trials and sacrifices of those to whom we owe both. But, noble as these subjects are, the observance might still be dull, if continued merely out of respect to usage or a town-vote. It gains spirit at once if we can connect with the Declaration and War of our Independence something kindred in the passions, struggles and hopes of our own day. The hearer is always glad to have a real, present case in which he can fasten those vagrant and showy generalities, which form too large a part of our demonstrative orations. And the orator must be as thankful as the audience; for it is both a relief of labor and

an enriching of the mind to start with something near and definite, and to feel it all the way.

But of that whole class of literary discourses to which I before alluded, and of a large part of occasional addresses,—not overlooking the performances of my young friends here, on our public days,—it may be safely said that the interest depends mainly upon the speaker. He can scarcely expect help from accident or from forcing into his service anything foreign to his subject. The whole work of moving his audience may be thrown upon him. It will not be enough to prepare an address that will do to read. They might as well have staid at home till it was printed. They have come together for new impression, larger views and stronger faith. There must be a popular tone to the address, an adaptation to various minds, so that all shall be moved, though they be moved differently. They have brought their common nature to the place of assembly. They have not provided themselves with a peculiar set of feelings or susceptibilities to bring them into readier communication with the speaker. They have not spent hours with him in his study to investigate his subject or learn the general course of his remarks. They expect him to furnish thoughts for them and command their attention.

To answer these demands, it is too obvious to be said that, besides a perfect mastery of his subject, he must have a deep and sustained interest in what he is saying. He must believe that he is uttering what others ought to hear and take to heart, though in fact it be no more urgent that a general concern should be felt in it to-day, than it was a year ago or will be a year to come. Whatever be the subject, he must have his points fixed and always visible, his statements almost laboriously distinct, the strain of the discourse unbroken; and, by all the power of imagination he possesses, he must try to keep up a gentle, steady, cheering flame from the opening to the close.

Lastly, since his audience are at peace and ought not to be otherwise, let his style of delivery be quiet and familiar. The tones should be spontaneous and sincere, that they may gradually acquire that arresting power which marks the colloquial manner. Nobody can escape it. The subject is all in all to the speaker, and his hearers are conscious of nothing but deep impression.

## DELIBERATIVE ORATORY.

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ONE of the departments of eloquence known equally to the free states of ancient and of modern times, is that of deliberative bodies.

By these, we understand assemblies consulting upon the adoption or rejection of measures; and the business of the speaker is to advise, persuade or dissuade. As legislative bodies are the most important of the class, the term is almost exclusively applied to them; and in giving you my views of deliberative eloquence, I shall limit myself to its manifestation in a modern legislature. This will lead us to consider, first of all, the composition of such a body.

Our most popular legislative assemblies are composed of persons appointed from time to time, by the people, to represent them. We are not accustomed, nor would it be possible for us to bring the whole population together for the purpose of legislation; 'nor do we think that every person who is entitled to the protection



of laws is competent to make them.' Deputies, accordingly, are elected to act for the people in this behalf. The presumption is natural that men, in whom such a trust is reposed, will exercise some influence over their constituents, as well as consult their pleasure. They are sufficiently independent of the people to do what they hold to be their duty and best for the country, without incurring peril of any kind; — at least, such is the theory of free governments; — and yet, as they are soon to feel the popular supremacy at new elections, and as they themselves are to be subjected, equally with their neighbors, to every law which may be passed, we think we are pretty well guarded against their abuse of their power.

What, then, is the power of this representative assembly? With us, certainly, it is prescribed and limited. It falls short of that of the whole sovereign people, or of an absolute monarch. Our free institutions have distributed this limited legislative power among equal and independent branches, and made the consent of each essential to a bill's becoming a law. The popular branch is checked by one which is differently constituted, and which may even represent a somewhat different interest. In our country, this check is in the senate, either of the Union, where the particular states are represented as so many distinct sovereignties, — or of each state, where

at times this branch has, in part, represented property. You perceive that one object of such constitutions of government is to give every man and, to some extent, different interests, a proper weight in public affairs. There is no indication of a particular jealousy of popular influence, as if it were naturally a deadly one. There is very little to choose between forms of government, if they are wholly unchecked. Let a wise people, the fondest of liberty, undertake to frame a wholesome political constitution, and by the very act they are beginning the work of self-restraint, as the first element of true civil liberty.

We contend that in modern legislatures the people are surer of having a good influence over public counsels, than they were in the most unchecked democracies of antiquity, for the reason that they are less liable to be misled by their leaders or by deceptive promises or representations from any quarter. Hume, in his essay on 'some remarkable customs,'\* includes among them the provision of the Athenian law for the better security of the state against demagogues. The Athenians had suffered enough, it seems, from their tumultuous democracy, to feel the necessity of some better restrictions than any rule they could devise for the government of their own popular assembly; in other words, for the government of themselves. They had not

\* Essays. Vol. ii. p. 128.

sufficient confidence in themselves to expect that the judgments they should form under the influence of a powerful eloquence, would be approved by them in their cooler moments. They were afraid of their orators; and, for security, they fell in vengeance upon the orators, and visited them with the punishment that would have been as fairly directed against their own sins or follies. The orator was in peril of a trial and condemnation in a court of law, if any measure was adopted by the people on his motion, and afterwards held by the court to be injurious. You will judge then of the competency of the people to legislate, and of the freedom of the orator who addressed them. Hume remarks, that the Athenians ‘justly considered themselves as in a state of perpetual pupillage; where they had an authority, after they came to the use of reason, not only to retract and control whatever had been determined, but to punish any guardian for measures which they had embraced by his persuasion.’

Our simple remedy for the evils of ill-organized liberty is in choosing from among ourselves a limited number to be the organ of the popular mind and will; and the demagogue, who might easily inflame and control a mixed multitude, may find himself baffled in his attempts upon a small assembly, coming from many different places, well confided in by those of their neigh-

borhood, and representing somewhat different interests and opinions.

In the passing of laws, we see how much more the dignity and safety of the people are consulted in modern than in the ancient free states. The popular branch does not wait for the senate to prepare measures, as was provided by the constitution of Solon. The house of representatives originates laws at its pleasure, and, in that most important one which provides for raising revenue, the bill must be introduced there. Its deliberations are perfectly free. There is no magistrate who can defer its proceedings to another day, by pretending that the auspices are unfavorable. There is no power that can interfere to regulate its debates, and no apprehension that a usurping sovereign or president will break in upon its consultations to overawe or scatter the assembly. To be sure, they cannot send their tribune to stop the grave proceedings of the fathers; but the history of popular branches of government may teach them to be content with the inviolability of their own privileges.

I am now to offer you some remarks upon the character of our deliberative eloquence. As they may appear to you exaggerated, if not wholly unsupported by facts, I say here, once for all, that in my views of the state of eloquence, in any of its departments, I do not refer to particular speakers or occasions. I merely give you

my idea of the genuine characteristics of the best eloquence that grows naturally out of our institutions and state of society, so far as this idea seems to me to be justified by my observation. The picture may be ideal ; or, at any rate, few orators may answer to it in the whole. Still, if it be true in its details, though never realized in their entire combination, it will be more just and more instructive, as a general sketch, than one which gave you a sort of average estimate of modern oratory.

I begin, then, with saying that the eloquence of our deliberative assemblies is such as we should expect from their constitution or theory. In general, it is marked by a spirit of independence, or by a man's sense of his individual importance. I do not mean by this a boisterous impatience of opposition, a rude abuse of constituted authorities, or a contempt of plebeian wisdom. Such independence is low-bred, and easily tamed by a man of true spirit and elevation, who has a proper respect for himself, and a scrupulous delicacy towards the feelings and claims of others. The independence I would illustrate is dignified and unoppressive, and springs immediately from a becoming pride, and from a man's consciousness of his political privileges, and of his responsibility to himself as well as to others. He is not to bring his prejudices or his private interests with him, when he pro-

fesses to act for a whole people. He is not to think of the place, or the honors, or the popularity he may gain or forfeit, by following this or that course of public conduct. He is not the creature of a king, of a set of ministers, or of his constituents. He has nothing to fear for his personal safety. The enemy that lies in wait for him is more formidable, more subtle than the assassin. It is the influence which affection, or prejudice, or self-interest may exercise over his judgment, and of commanding minds over opinions and resolves which he ought never to surrender. Such weakness or vice of the mind, as is here implied, belongs to no age or state of society; but the moral checks upon it and the restoring virtues may be exceedingly multiplied and strengthened by improved public sentiment. A man cannot be long in doubt that if he would have wide and firm influence among freemen now, he must follow out his sincere, deliberate opinions through good report and evil report, and in the face of every temptation.

Another effect of modern free institutions upon deliberative oratory may be seen in the intellectual character and moral tone of a popular debate. In the ancient democracies, where almost every man was a legislator and had his vote on public measures, — such a multitude of statesmen, all fond of politics, all practically versed in government, and rarely meeting with-



out some exciting business, may have presented to an orator a more inspiring audience than our two or three hundred considerate representatives, assembled at a stated season to legislate for months together, upon matters of a private as well as of a public nature, and then returning quietly to their distant and far-separated homes, and to their daily affairs which they may have reluctantly quitted. It should seem, too, that we are less capable of sudden, violent and transient excitement; or that from temperament, or from circumstances, we live less in a habit of passion. It is probable that a single popular allusion, nay, a single word might have produced a more tumultuous sensation in a Roman or Athenian crowd, than the most awful appeal to men's hearts from Burke, or Chatham, or Ames, or Patrick Henry could produce now.

But we must not argue for or against the eloquence of different ages and nations from the immediate external effect. Sometimes the sudden outbreak of passion in the audience is the sign of a deep and never-dying sentiment and purpose; and the orator's victory will be as memorable as that of his countrymen in the next great fight. And yet, sometimes, when there is no outward demonstration beyond the sedate look, the hush of expectation and the low rustling of an agitated throng, there shall be passion as profound and resolve as unmovable. I think



that it takes nothing from the merit of modern political orators to concede, that our most impassioned popular eloquence is marked throughout with the intention of leading considerate men to responsible action. It wears a somewhat serious and business character. It generally has not so much the air of a studied, finished discourse prepared for an appointed occasion, as that of extemporaneous address;—the substance well-weighed beforehand, and perhaps without reference to the immediate demand; but the style and manner partaking of all those changes which the mind itself experiences, when engaged and strongly affected by present interesting circumstances, and receiving a direction to its own thoughts, as well as giving one to those of others.

Our deliberative eloquence, when it professes to be most popular, still grounds itself in truth; sometimes, it may be, the most general and abstract truth; but always for an obvious and practical use. The orator does not speak of the history of his country to set the people wild by reminding them of the great deeds of their fathers, but to explain and apply the nation's experience. He does not speak as if all the good of a speech were done at the moment of its delivery, or as if emotion were the great end of all eloquence. He knows that he is addressing men who are capable of strong passion, but who are

in the habit of demanding a warrant or justification for passion. And it is in unconscious obedience to the demands of their known character, that he becomes the eloquent expounder of deep, wide-branching, far-stretching political truth. He recognizes connection in events, perpetuity in the action of political causes, identity in the nature of man, under all governments and in all climates; while he also admits the power of present circumstances to modify the application and influence of long-acknowledged principles. So that he is forever engaged in a course of prophetic reasoning, as well as in explaining the immediate bearings of a question. He binds the truths and the wisdom of to-day to those of all past time, and to those that will be the fruit of a still larger experience in the ages to come. He is a philosopher in the best sense of the term, and yet as familiar with affairs and as safe in his deductions as a man whose whole life has been spent in calculations and details.

Perhaps I cannot better illustrate my meaning than by saying that our genuine deliberative orator speaks in the spirit with which Burke wrote, when he undertook to give a right direction to public opinion in England on the subject of the French Revolution. Was there ever a finer topic for the explosions of a demagogue, or for the servile commonplaces of a courtier? But he was neither. He fell not into a disgust-

ing adulation of kings, or a scornful invective against popular sentiment, or a deceptive panegyric of freedom. He went to the foundation of government, yes, of society itself, in England and everywhere. He showed what sorts of innovation were to be dreaded, and what sort of deference to old feelings and old observances was useful and honorable, and what alone it was that deserved the name of freedom. He talked to men who had been in the habit of thinking and feeling correctly; and his triumph of eloquence was in settling the strange disorder of their minds, in clearing the atmosphere of bewildering mists, and saving his countrymen from adopting sentiments of liberty that were as foreign to their whole nature and life as the death-like rule of an eastern despot.

We will now attend to some of the peculiarities and uses of deliberative oratory. The relation in which the speaker stands to his audience is peculiar. He is one of the assembly he addresses. Every member has equal right with himself to express his opinions and to introduce measures, under such regulations as the house may establish. He has nothing to do with spectators. His remarks must be intended and directed to his companions. He is to adhere to the principle on which such a body is formed,—that deliberation, consultation is the means of arriving at the most prudent

conclusion. But he is not obliged to go into the whole question under debate, or to make a formal oration. He may ask for advice, state his doubts and difficulties, answer a remark from some one member, explain one of his own that has been misapprehended, and maintain or oppose some opinion which has only a partial bearing on the measure discussed. Sometimes, the debate will be little more than a conversation between members, though, for the preservation of order, it must in form be addressed to the presiding officer.

Observe here one difference between debate and arguments at the bar, where the counsel having pledged themselves to give the best support they can to the side for which they are engaged, are, from beginning to end, doing their utmost to obtain from the court or jury an opinion or a verdict. The deliberative orator is at least supposed to have adopted no opinion which he will not abandon for a better. He is not to think so much of bringing a majority to his side, as of ascertaining which side is the true one for all, by offering his own views and listening to those of others. In short, all the parties have but one and the same client.

It has been said that this is very well in theory, and might be very well in practice; but that in fact it is quite idle to talk of the

great fairness of mind which is supposed to distinguish a legislative assembly. For a politician will form his opinion and hold to it, like other men. He must be something more or less than human, to go into a house of parliament, first of all, to have those opinions questioned, sifted and tried, as if they were doubtful, which his laborious inquiries have led him to form, and which his pride, his interest, his self-love will tell him to hold fast, whatever unexpected light the discussion may throw on them. He goes believing he is in the right ; and he will and he ought to do his best to make others think with him.

The answer to this is, that truth is better than self-conceit or victory. The orator with his mind made up will say so too. And if he have firmness and circumspection, there can be no doubt that the hottest controversy will only strengthen his carefully formed belief, by showing still more clearly the strength of its foundation. A fair mind is not a yielding and unstable one, that forms no opinion for itself, but waits for another and another to act upon it, and do the whole work of thinking for it. Nor is it one that has no confidence in its opinions, till others have passed upon and sanctioned them. If we see a man unwavering in his sentiments through the fiercest debate, we have no right to say that he has resolved against

all change; it may be that he has guarded against all reason for change. If the statesman is in error, he may be set right. If others are less informed or less sound, he will set them right. If his peculiar sentiments are little suited to the temper of the people or the state of things, he is so to modify them as to secure the greatest practicable good, without the slightest desertion of right. If, after all this, he finds himself in the minority, he must not go on with concession after concession, till he has given up all that he owed to a good cause, to his country, to the world, to distant ages, for the sake of humoring the populace, or of being taken into favor at court. He must leave his opinions to the fairer judgments that certainly await them.

But it is further urged against the efficacy of debates in modern times, that every representative belongs to some political party, and goes to the assembly with his mind made up to vote with his party on every question that has the least political bearing. The legislature itself does not deserve to be called a deliberative body when such questions are before it. The ministry will of course find their party in full array for the cabinet; and the opposition, as a matter of course, will resist every measure that comes from that quarter, and, in general, for no other reason.



In reply to a part of this statement, we might ask whether there is not as much deliberation, as frequent interchange of well-weighed opinions, and as prudently formed convictions in our senates and parliaments, as there were in the ancient assemblies ; and if so, why are they not as well entitled to the name of deliberative bodies ? But further,—suppose that political parties are arrayed against each other, ever so resolutely in the senate-house, yet how is a party to be kept up ? How are converts to be made ? How are antagonists to be weakened ? How are the people without the walls to be held together in steady support of one side or another ? Surely not by intrigue, corruption, and falsehood. These may sometimes answer in extreme cases ; but they are the desperate means of bad men, and must soon ruin those who try them, even in a worse state of society than ours. A party is not kept together by the mere prudent management of a few leaders. Orators and writers must be active to set forth and defend its opinions and objects. Its rivals will gain dangerous ground if they have the whole artillery of wit, argument, invective, and passion left to their own undisputed service. Silence will be discomfiture.

This may, indeed, seem more like waging war than deliberation. But the question re-ates now to the efficacy of debates ; and what is



their effect? Why, that the minds of the stoutest partisans are often arrested; sometimes by fear, sometimes by the downright sense of a speech. There are, even at this day, many changes of opinion produced by better inquiry and information. And when you see the anxiety of political leaders, lest they should lose their majority by desertion, you need not doubt that their alarm is more from the power of public discussion than of secret influence. And, besides those who are regularly enlisted under one or another political standard, many yet remain to choose their side by what they may hear said for it. Then, how many questions there are on which men are not yet divided, and on which the public are yet to receive direction.

I see nothing in our political organizations or in the character and proceedings of our deliberative bodies to discourage an orator from aiming at a decisive sway over men. It will cost him time, patience, labor. He has the prejudices, the ingenuity, the wisdom and calm convictions of enlightened minds to act upon; not the senses and passions of an unthinking populace. But the thought should be exhilarating and sustaining, that he has men near who understand him and whom he respects. Let him not complain of the slow pace of his influence. He may hope to do his work more thoroughly and leave an impression more deep,

by his steady, persevering attempts on men's minds.

Let it be remembered that legislatures cannot safely decide now with the rapidity of an ancient popular assembly. The ways of ascertaining the sense of the people on public matters are often less simple now than they once were. The masses are not at hand to show their opinions and wishes by acclamations or murmurs. But a man of observation will learn in good time how far he may rely upon a general support of measures, and to some extent whether they are likely to have but a brief popularity or to become part of the settled policy of the country. That more time is taken now than was required in Athens for legislators to make up their minds, does not of itself prove that their measures are more complicated or critical; but it certainly shows that they are anxious to learn the views of their constituents; that they are disposed to consider propositions in all their bearings; that they are accustomed to think for themselves, and to act rather from individual conviction than from joint impulse.

Of course, the changes of opinion in modern deliberative bodies, like those in society at large, will proceed, for the most part, slowly and regularly; but they will certainly take place, for the better or the worse. The sand-drift of the desert might almost as well be expected to

become one immovable mountain, as that public sentiment or party feeling and objects should be immutable. All history, all experience is against it. Parties, that have kept their names and their love and possession of power, have nevertheless dropt, from time to time, their long-popular and all-prevailing cries and watch-words. Favorite schemes of policy have been abandoned by ministers and factions; and men of the highest influence have deserted their old standards, from principle, or fear, or ambition, ever since communities have been divided into sects and parties.

Sometimes this mutability is hurtful. But, in general, we take it to give hope of good progress in morals and in political wisdom; and without it we could never rid ourselves of errors. Till men are perfect, there will be something to mend in what they fondly deem their soundest opinions; and a blind adherence is debasing obstinacy. In the inquiry for truth, they must assist themselves and each other; and even in these days of cool judgment and tenacity of opinion, the influence is immense which one man may exercise over another, both in private intercourse and in public discussion.

## JUDICIAL ORATORY.—THE PROFESSION AND THE TRIBUNAL.

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A LAWYER is so thoroughly a man of study and business that, if asked what idea he entertained of the eloquence of the bar, we should not be surprised at his answering, — ‘I know of no such thing.’ Lookers-on are more open to impression, and to them may be left the task of noting its circumstances and its peculiarities. Their attention will be drawn first to the profession itself.

A lawyer is an officer of a court of justice, who publicly professes that he will take upon him to give advice in all matters of a legal nature, and to maintain and defend such rights and interests as may be contested before the courts.

How is it that such a profession came to be established? In almost all nations we are acquainted with, except the most simple or most barbarous, we are sure to find lawyers. Sometimes they constitute, as with us, a distinct body

in the state; and sometimes they perform the duties of the office for friends and dependents, though not devoted exclusively or principally to the practice. Why is it not now as it was in the simpler ages of the world, when the patriarch of a tribe, or the sovereign of a community of shepherds or husbandmen, was both the lawgiver and the unassisted judge; when the aggrieved stated his own wrong, the accused defended his own innocence, and all had justice done them without a bribe or a fee, — without the expense which now falls alike on the just and the unjust litigant?

There are men, even at this day, who trace the origin of this profession to the ambition and arts of a few able spirits, who saw a way open to influence and profit by encouraging and managing the strifes of their neighbors. They observe much to complain of in the unprincipled doings of a part of the profession. Perhaps they have suffered severely themselves from the hardships with which the impartial judgments of a court sometimes fall upon the unfortunate; and in their moments of sore irritation they charge the calamity upon the whole body of lawyers, and hold them up to abhorrence as the enemies of the peace of neighborhoods, and as living upon the bad passions and hard fortunes of others. But in another and perhaps a more reasonable view of things, the legal profession has arisen from the necessities of our condition.

We may say from our vices, if we please. These are no doubt accountable in part, as they are for many other wise and useful institutions. I suppose it may be said with truth that all the liberal professions had their beginning in some necessity of mind, body or estate.

But they do not seem to be all regarded with equal favor. We do not complain that the clergyman and physician are always at hand. We offer them every encouragement to come among us. They give relief and comfort when we are suffering under inevitable evils, or under such as we have brought upon ourselves. But a man in possession of an estate, and, it may be most lawfully in possession, sees a merely artificial evil of the social system when the intruder comes to dispute his right. At any rate he will insist that society ought to bear all the burden of defending a good title which it allows to be disputed. He exclaims, 'why should I fight and pay for that which, by the law itself, is mine? Why should I suffer loss and disquiet, because some litigious neighbor chooses to doubt my right and set up a false claim of his own?'

There is hardship or at least inconvenience in this, as in many other cases where the institutions of society try to do their best for protecting individual rights and settling controversies. The courts are impartially opened to all; and it must not be presumed that any claim

is false. An examination must be had, and here unexpected difficulties may require professional aid at considerable expense, — probably at much greater than would be compensated by the legal allowance of costs. Let not the lawyer be blamed for evils that he did not create and does not continue. If human affairs could but grow less and less complicated every day, so that a few simple rules would anticipate and provide for every case; or if we could but grow good enough to leave safely all questions to the decision of a single judge or ruler, we should live in a very different world from this, and have no farther occasion for lawyers or rhetoricians. As things are, we shall take it for granted that the profession must exist as a distinct body of men learned in the law.

We come next to topics that bear somewhat upon the opportunities and the character of legal eloquence. There are with us two very different audiences to be addressed, — the court and the jury. In some stage of almost every case before a court of law, both will have to take a part in it; and, — what to inexperienced persons might appear a very awkward arrangement and most unpropitious to eloquence, — the advocate will often be compelled to turn to the court with one part of his case, and then to the jury with another. Practically, however, this course is not at all embarrassing to any of the parties. My purpose



being to speak of the lawyer as an orator, it is proper to consider the character and office of the two very different bodies he addresses. Let us begin with the court. If we have a distinct idea of the spirit and manner in which it administers justice, we shall have no doubt that it exercises a decided influence on legal eloquence.

A man, little versed in legal proceedings, on going into court and seeing the judges and counsel studying, with a caution almost amounting to reverence, voluminous reports of decisions, running perhaps through centuries, and for the purpose of deciding a case which, he thinks, he could settle justly in a very few minutes, would wonder, perhaps, why the eternal rule of right or the simple dictates of honesty and good sense were not allowed to have effect in a court of justice. He would not understand you, if you were to insist that in a thousand cases nothing was wanted but to ascertain what the law was; and that it was no more a matter of conscience or good sense than it was of mathematics, whether the words of a deed, for instance, gave an estate for life or in fee-simple. He would be equally in the dark if you should urge upon him, that it is often much more important to have the law settled than to have it perfectly acceptable. Certainty, then, in the law and an intelligible interpretation are the first things to be secured.

The cited authorities may not extend to all

the circumstances of a case ; yet, wisely interpreted, they may furnish a rule that will reach the material points. Besides, then, a severe analysis of the case in hand, the decisions that appear to bear on it must be examined and distinguished, in order to avoid giving undue weight either to points of resemblance or to those of difference. In all this we see nothing but the exercise of patient inquiry and keen discrimination, for the purpose of administering the law consistently and upon principles, in defiance of all complaints as to a particular hardship in this or that instance. To acute minds there must be a great charm in a scrutiny like this ; and no doubt they would see much in the process and the result which they would call beautiful. Common language, however, has reserved the word, eloquence, for somewhat different occasions and discourse.

But the anxiety of modern courts to settle and adhere to principles is not all that may affect the tone and style of bar oratory. They are equally anxious to have a cause placed upon its merits, upon points which are really and solely at the heart of the controversy ; and in settling which you determine something material between the parties. Hence the formality with which a suit is brought into court. A party is expected to rest his case deliberately on the grounds which he feels most safe upon, and the

opposite side is to know what he must reply to. The whole proceedings, up to the moment when the argument may be said to begin, are prudently ordered to bring the parties at length to some substantial matter of dispute.

This brief view of the court, which might be easily extended, is enough to impress upon you the care that is taken to arrive at certainty both in regard to the law and the facts. The effect upon the orator is the only thing which we are to bear in mind. If the judge were at liberty to follow his own discretion, or conscience, or fancy, it would be, in some respects, a better day for public speakers; but the times are as little favorable to the revival of the Roman prætorship as of the imperial rescripts.

Let us now imagine a cause ready for argument before a tribunal composed of a few grave and learned men, appointed to hear and decide in all questions of law, where life, property, reputation and personal freedom are involved, and convened for the purpose at stated seasons. What style of address would be the most fitting for the whole occasion? What character would be stamped upon forensic eloquence by the very persons to whom it appeals?

The judge will inspire, or rigidly exact from the advocate, the same severe adherence to what is material to the question, which he has imposed upon himself. He will as soon admit a laxity in

practice, as vagueness or irrelevancy in the argument. And this severity will be as unlike as possible the cold, captious refinements of merely scholastic reasoners, occupied with mystical abstractions and verbal tactics. This severity is exercised for the very reason that some important matter is in dispute, and that strictness both of investigation and argument is essential to a full elucidation. The ends of justice are thought to be subserved by precision and formality. It is clear, then, that a lawyer is not to speak that he may entertain the judge; nor is he to think a moment of persuading him to give a favorable opinion. He is not to appeal to private feelings of interest or resentment, or suppose that eloquent declamation about right and wrong will give any force of sanctity to his claim. He is not to attempt to make judges reverse their decisions, or treat those of their predecessors with disrespect. The whole inquiry is, — what saith the law? And in pursuing it, he may employ analysis and statement, illustration and argument, to give information and effect conviction.

If, then, juridical discussion is thus hedged in; if the atmosphere within its borders is to be kept forever at so mild a temperature, and the sky to be always cloudless and serene, what place is there for eloquence with its tempests and lightnings? Of what use can it be? The answer to these questions shall have a distinct place.

## JUDICIAL ORATORY.

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MANY persons seem to think that no speech can properly be called eloquent which is not fitted to excite the passions,—that is, to move and persuade; just as many persons hold that no writing can properly be called poetical which does not abound in lofty and brilliant diction and in florid ornaments. The better idea seems to be that any discourse, which can with propriety come under the notice of rhetoric, is eloquent, if it be adapted to our purpose. The understanding needs one kind of eloquence for impression as decidedly as the affections require another kind for agitation. This distinction, though most natural and simple, is too often overlooked.

I have sought in vain for a word or phrase that would adequately characterize the style of eloquence that best becomes the discussion of a pure question of law. I thought of *didactic*. This would express a part of its quality, and

yet nothing exclusively its own. Moreover, the term would scarcely be respectful to the court, and would better describe its own addresses than those of the advocate. I thought of *argumentative* eloquence; but it would not do, because this term applies to popular, persuasive speeches as truly as to those addressed to the bench. Erskine with his juries, Demosthenes stimulating the people to resistance, Ames defending the British treaty, have more or less of the popular element in their appeals; but they are all the time establishing propositions the most distinct and pertinent, by proof upon proof. Of course, different occasions and subjects admit of and demand a difference in the manner. It must be granted that sometimes the argument is so incorporated with persuasion that no separate appeal to the feelings is called for; and this may explain the want of discrimination which leads men to consider a discourse as wholly of one character, merely because that character is to them most prominent and peculiarly attractive.

Let us try to distinguish some of the properties of law eloquence. Generally, as might be expected, it is marked by calmness, by a firm, steady march to its object, by a composure which a mastery of the subject and the gravity of such investigations would ordinarily inspire.

It is marked by distinct order. It observes relations and dependencies among the successive

details of proof, till the great proposition which they are establishing is reached. So natural is the disposition of every part, that both the speaker and his hearer always feel secure that they are moving in the direction they started with and towards the object they set out for. The words are chosen which give the best light, and for that reason only. They are arranged, too, with a single regard to the same effect. There cannot be too much light if it fall truly on the object.

This eloquence is further marked by force, direct force, augmenting at every step, though never vehement in the sense of moving the passions, but impressing thoughts on the mind with dignified, masculine energy.

We may add to these very obvious properties, those of warmth and beauty. As these may be rather unexpected in connection with eloquence of such a character, some explanation shall be given.

As we said before, some persons think that a man cannot reason and be eloquent at the same time. Acuteness of judgment seems to imply, and a connected view of arguments to require, coldness and austerity. They will admit as readily as any one that such men as Shakspeare, Milton and Burke are safe authorities in their estimates of facts, of characters, of society, of human life, of good morals and prudent conduct.



In these and numerous other respects, they were not deceived or distracted by their ardent or imaginative natures. Still, there is an indefinite notion that such natures are adverse to sober, protracted, involved exercises of the reasoning faculty. They must depend mainly on inspiration or intuition, and leave to other, perhaps inferior, minds the hard, patient struggles with difficulty.

Here it seems to be taken for granted that what is difficult to the inferior mind is out of the province of the higher ; when it might have been as reasonable to suppose that the man of genius would, by a process of his own, find the work to be easy as well as congenial. We must settle questions of this kind by observing the different constitutions of men's minds. If a merely sensible man should try to be impassioned and ornate, he would probably fail both as an orator and a logician. If a man of at all a poetical spirit should try to make a statement or argument with a resolution to shun every poetical expression and influence, he would be sure to think feebly and inefficiently, and to do incalculable harm, by his self-denial, to the point he wished to carry. If it be in the nature of a man to reason with ardor, and to set forth his reasoning richly and vividly, he should do so, and he will reason with the greater power for it. There is no natural hostility between the operations of

the mind, or the modes of presenting truth. If a man has the taste to discern what manner of speaking becomes the occasion, and if his mind is so balanced that his powers can act together, he has no cause to fear that any faculty will come into action unseasonably, nor will he meet with a single occasion where it will be necessary to suppress his natural temperament.

Thus if he is of a fervid spirit, it will not flash or consume; but, ever burning deeply underneath, it will quietly pervade his gravest discourse, just as it mellows the voice or serenely lights up the face. So if he have imagination, it will help him in arguing, not merely by animating and sustaining him in his severe task, but sometimes by suggesting on the sudden a short, lively image, that illuminates far and wide the difficult ground he has just travelled over or is now entering upon. More especially will it serve him by making him contemplate the most abstract thoughts which he is putting together, as something visible, and capable of being made so to others. The structure that he rears, so sure and simple in its foundation, so compact in all its parts, so perfectly arranged that the dependence and use of each part are seen, is not the work of mere sagacity or ingenuity. It could not have been formed by the most diligent artisan, building with another's materials and according to another's model. It could not have been

put together by one who has no idea of a perfect edifice before he begins, but slowly joins piece to piece and raises pile upon pile, no matter how weak or misshapen the mass, if he only uses up his materials and labors all the time he contracted for. Perhaps it is not going too far to say, that to make a perfect argument, — an argument that has beauty to satisfy the taste, as well as conclusiveness to assure the judgment, — requires creative power, an eye that can see far and rapidly, and search through and illuminate a chaos, and bring a fair and stable world into view from what seemed vacancy or disorder.

How is it that lawyers of equal learning and prudence differ so much in the impression they make? Men go from a court of justice, after witnessing a severe contest, and in reporting their opinion of the arguments, they will say that one of the advocates had no fault that they can precisely define, and yet there was a prevailing heaviness or a want of impressiveness. He did not take in the case as a whole, which he had at command, but appeared to be forever occupied with separate details. He certainly said every thing that could be said, with the utmost fidelity, and might even have spared much. He was intelligible and unexceptionable, and probably will gain the cause. But you should have heard the other. The moment he rose, in reply, it seemed as if he were commissioned to revive a

fatigued audience. In a few words he made his opponent's argument clearer than he himself had done; and then, with the utmost simplicity, directness and strength he stated his own grounds. The hearer was disposed, at first, to pity him for the perplexed and boundless range of argument or examination which he must travel over in his reply merely. But the field was soon brought within very moderate limits; easy paths were opened through all that was obstructed, and a warm light fell upon the ground as the clouds were scattered from over it.

If such illumination had been poured upon us in a work of elegant literature, we should not have scrupled to ascribe it to the magic of poetry. We should have admired the facility with which a man of genius could bring directly before our eyes a distinct picture of what seemed too vast, or involved, or abstract for human comprehension. We should not have heard a word about the hostility between the logic of a reasoner and the inspiration of genius.

And there is no such hostility. I have been describing nothing but the triumph of genuine argumentative eloquence,—an eloquence of a high order and influence, but unassisted by a single outbreak of passion. That a great orator of this class has in him the elements that con-

stitute the most impassioned speaker; that he is capable of the highest eloquence in the popular sense of the word, I am well convinced. I have only shown how skilfully he could adapt his discourse to the halls of justice. He had no occasion there for that popular argumentative eloquence which, besides working conviction, is to give a tone to an assembly; which is to instruct the ignorant, kindle the indifferent, convert the prejudiced, conciliate the inimical, and impel the friendly. He needed only the succinct, elastic, transparent eloquence which makes bright the severest and least inspiring truth, and does it justice.

To any who still think that something is wanting to the orator who is merely addressing the court, we may urge that there is a fountain of eloquence in the very purpose and bearing of every legal argument. A contest upon a simple point of law must involve to some extent the question of right and wrong; the duty of respecting our neighbor's claims; the necessity of subordination. It must involve vindication and protection. The judge himself must be eloquent, when he speaks in behalf of public morals, liberty and order. The hearty lover of his profession must be eloquent when he sets forth the harmonious system of the law, its oversight of human affairs for the quieting of disputes, and the kind equality with which it

extends security to all. Every cause in which a lawyer is engaged is of more or less importance to every one of us. And if he feels deeply that he is bound to do not only a duty to his client, but also an office in behalf of the public well-being, he will come to every legal discussion as to a contest for right, which the law has provided for, and which he is to bring under its protection. What power of an orator may not go forth to such a battle?

Having thus considered the opportunity for eloquence of a certain character, in an address to a court upon a point of law, it remains to speak of addresses to a jury upon the facts to which the law is applied. Here, I believe, every one admits that there is room for very decided demonstration of the oratorical power; and it may be worth while to enumerate a few particulars relating to jury trials which are more obviously favorable to a popular kind of eloquence than a mere legal argument can be.

And first, here are twelve men selected from among our neighbors to inquire into and settle a dispute about facts. They are free from the caution and self-restraint which professional habits and experience are supposed to form in the judge and the lawyer. As sensible and free-minded men, they are listening to the parties, as each tells his story, and receiving

impressions from the appearance of witnesses and the manner in which they give their testimony, very much as they would do if they had stopped in the streets to hear the mutual altercations of two men who had fallen into some sudden difference.

The question before them we shall suppose to be one wholly of facts to be established by witnesses who are present. This view is the most favorable for my purpose, and sufficient to give a good general idea of the juror's relation to the advocate. Think, then, of the interest which all men feel in facts, occurrences, transactions, situations, whether real or fictitious. We are called to take part in the fortunes of men, which we have experienced or may experience ourselves. We are studying their characters, motives, temptations and devices. We are sharing their hopes and fears, their disasters and success, and observing the connection of circumstances to learn how events were brought about. There is none of the difficulty to be overcome which attends the effort to interest others or ourselves in the discussion of abstract truth, or in the application of general principles.

A lawyer never forgets that the juror brings into court the common susceptibilities of men; and he may make a very justifiable use of this knowledge in various ways. Thus in respect to the evidence, — much of it is not of so direct



and positive a nature, as to satisfy a man whom a scrupulous and sceptical turn of mind has accustomed to demand a sort and degree of proof in regard to matters of fact, which instinct or experience has taught most persons not to expect or need. To a man of right feelings, who takes practical views of things, who has some knowledge of the heart, and can judge of subtile motives and intentions from slight actions and words, very indirect evidence, and very insufficient too if the circumstances are taken separately, may have a brightness and conclusiveness more satisfying than round, positive assertions that things were thus on the contrary. This, I admit, implies sagacity in the juror, but a sagacity that owes as much at least to feeling as to reason. — Moreover, he is often called upon to make allowance for the infirmities of men. The transactions of perfectly honest persons may have a doubtful appearance, which may be easily cleared up to a man of honorable, generous sentiments, who can feel and explain embarrassments which no positive testimony can be brought to remove.

Then with respect to the witness himself, — though a perfectly honest man, his statements may be open to unfavorable construction. Yet a juror, who can feel the difference between the reserve or vagueness of a conscientious and of an artful witness, will become an interpreter for

him who cannot explain himself fully, and trust him the more for the scrupulosity, hesitation, and sometimes even for the inconsistency, which have startled the wary and uncharitable minds of others.— The same discernment will serve to detect the flaws that lurk in the most plausible testimony.

Such are some of the qualities in jurors on which the advocate relies to bring them to his side. They are as much bound as the court to judge rightly of what is submitted to them. But obviously in many cases a just judgment depends upon their sympathies being won. The facts are of a nature to move the feelings. Their truth, importance and bearings are best perceived by the feelings, and could not justly be weighed without them. This appears, for example, in cases where the jury are to award to the injured party what are called his damages. They are not only to determine his right, but to see that the violation is repaired. In a court of law, this is to be done by an equivalent in money ; and where the wrong to be redressed is merely to one's property or lawful gains, this may be a simple and adequate reparation. But there are injuries to the person, to reputation, to family honor and peace, to which a different and less definite measure of wrong and redress must be applied, and which appeal immediately to our moral judgment and profoundest sym-

pathies. Still, as the only compensation which the law provides is in silver and gold, the dignity of the claim and the magnitude of the grievance may seem to be less imposing. But we cannot suppose that all who resort to this remedy expect a full equivalent for their wrongs, or would expect it from any award to themselves, or from any punishment of the wrong-doer. The verdict is to place them before the world clear of all imputation. It is to measure the damages by the character and circumstances of the parties and of the injury. It is to set a stigma on the offender; and the punishment it inflicts may be the one that he will most feel. Nowhere, surely, could the orator have a finer armory of eloquence for offensive warfare.

Once more, it is before a jury that the public offender is brought, in order that the public peace and security may be vindicated. And it is to a jury that the citizen of a free country looks for protection, if ever the hand of government lies heavy on him, and judges, leaning to the side of party or of power, are ready to sacrifice him who is obnoxious. An honest man has nothing to fear for liberty or life, so long as he is sure of a fair trial by his equals, and has a right to defend himself in the face of the world.

There is, then, an access to the feelings and discretion of jurors, which is and forever ought to be closed when we approach the judge. They

are to be addressed in innumerable cases, and to answer as fathers, husbands, friends, as men of honor and generosity, as men of business well acquainted with common life, as men responsible for the republic, and, as it were, personally interested in the security of every individual and of the state.

I do not mean, by this view of jury trials, that the whole is an affair of the feelings. The arguments upon facts are sometimes the severest and most difficult that can task the human powers; and the truth cannot be reached but by the keenest search and the rarest powers of distinguishing and combining. In the preceding remarks, I had a particular object in view; and I thought it would be best accomplished by considering a jury trial in only one aspect.

From what has been said, the general difference between the style of eloquence suited to a court and to a jury is obvious. In addresses to the bench, it is grave, composed, luminous, compact. It is under such restraints as a man's good taste will impose, when he is in the presence of his acknowledged superiors, who are to decide upon the strength of his reasoning, and who have made such questions as he is investigating the serious study of their lives. The style of this eloquence is masculine, earnest and impressive; but it is also temperate and even subdued;—not, however, because the subjects are chilling,

nor because of the timid injunction of the great Athenian court, that no orator should attempt 'to win the favor or move the affections of the judges;' but because the whole business is investigation and reasoning to ascertain principles and their bearing. There is no longer a dispute about facts. We have left the public mart, the business of daily life, the passions and contentions of men. We have gone up from the noise and dust of battle, to consult the sages and oracles of wisdom, who are to declare, from venerable records, whose the right is.

In addresses to a jury, the style of eloquence is various and often popular. We have shown that jurors are and must be open to influence. The lawyer regards them as men with whom he may converse freely and even passionately about his wrongs and his perils. He will spare no means to give their minds a favorable leaning towards himself. He will aim directly at a personal influence. Every principle in their nature, that affects men's common opinions and conduct, he will strenuously appeal to, that he may bring them to his side and set them against his adversary

## THE ADVOCATE AND THE DEBATER.

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IN this country, lawyers constitute a distinct profession, and they have their professional schools. Their education is plainly a matter of public concern. The case is somewhat different with our statesmen, if indeed we have any persons amongst us who can properly be called such on account of their making politics their exclusive vocation. They certainly do not constitute a profession; and their preparation, whatever it may be, is either made indirectly, or, if purposed and systematic, it is altogether a private affair.

It should seem to be the general sentiment here that a lawyer's course of studies, his laborious contests in public argument, his habitual attempts to convince learned men on the bench and influence sensible and practical men on juries, are an ample preparation for debating the questions that occupy a political assembly. They are regularly educated for their profession

as the occupation of their lives and their means of subsistence. The business of legislation is rarely undertaken by them but for a season, and generally for the honor it confers, or for the pleasure of going into new scenes and forming new connections, or for acquiring influence in their profession, or that they may render in their turn the service which all able men owe to their country, but which is usually found irksome enough to make even the ambitious willing to divide the honor for the sake of escaping the labor. But whether prepared for the place or not, and whether fond of it or not, very many of them find their way into our legislative bodies.

In the course of time, should the number of wealthy men be increased, so that promising young heirs can forego lucrative employments for the sake of gaining honor and power in public stations ; — or, at any rate, if the openings to political life should ever become narrower and more difficult than they now are, it may be that the education of political men will not be a merely accidental and subordinate affair, — to be commenced, perhaps, when a man is called to public life ; — but that we shall have a class of statesmen as thoroughly bred to their business as lawyers to theirs.

Whether this would be for the better or the worse is not the question now. As the profession of the law is to a considerable extent the



school of our statesmen, let us consider whether the style of eloquence that is suitable to the bar be suitable also to a deliberative assembly. Or, in other words, is there any important distinction between legal argument and political debate? I think there is.

In debate there is altogether a freedom in the *manner*, in the choice of arguments, in the suggestion of motives, which would be out of place in addressing the bench. The debater's object is to persuade, to influence men's minds upon matters of opinion;—not to bind them reverently to an existing law, but to consult with them upon the need of new laws, and upon the repeal or modification of old ones. No precedents, no ancient opinions, no settled customs have any authority in this assembly, farther than they approve themselves to the judgment. Any man here may rise to overthrow the decrees of remote ages, to disabuse the public mind of errors that time had seemed to make too sacred for scrutiny, and to insist as roughly as he will upon the demands of a new era for change and progress.

And this is his duty, if it is his thought. It is expected of him. His opinion and reasons are wanted. He is to take just such a view of every question as he sees proper to take, and present it to others in any way that he thinks the best to make impression. He may bring arguments from every quarter; from poets and

philosophers ; from men of business and men of speculation ; from history and fiction, and from the treasury of his own invention and fancy. He may appeal to men's experience, to their fears, their pride, their infirmities, their affections, their self-love. Only imagine to yourselves a body of independent law-givers, assembled for the very purpose of forming and carrying an opinion, and bound to act by their own feeling or conviction of what is best, — some doubting and therefore to be assured ; some reluctant and therefore to be drawn over ; some ignorant and therefore to be informed, — and you see at once the orator's boundless field of influence. Moreover, it is a popular influence, for he has many minds to act upon, and must touch some common spring of action if he would gain opinions. All the resources of genius, and of his art, and of his knowledge of men are to be brought out and applied, that not one hearer may escape him.

Let him not think that he has done enough, though he should be able to say with perfect truth : — ' I have spoken wisely and prudently to these men. I have proved every important point and set it beyond controversy. I must have satisfied the good sense of every man who heard me, and convinced him what patriotism and common honesty require of him.' Some other disputant, better acquainted with the spirit

of a popular assembly, and who knows that address will often do more than a safe judgment or thorough political knowledge, will leave you to fight manfully for the truth and admire your generous assurance of a well-deserved victory, and content himself with seducing your supposed converts to put faith in him, by the blandishments, the fair promises, the fond appeals to self-love, which often make men prefer an error that flatters and pleases to a truth which annoys. To have sway, then, you must be able to turn against this man the arts which he uses for power. Your main reliance here is upon yourself. There is no judge in the seat of authority to check the disputant, and sum up the case clearly and honestly after the confusion of a long and stormy debate. Every voter is to follow his own pleasure; and every speaker must do what he can to determine his choice.

To have sway, the orator must be something more than what we call a man of ability. He must have a talent for his place. A rude street orator would manage a mob far better than Burke could do. A popular preacher or advocate might thin the seats of the senate house.

Many an able lawyer may not have learned till he became a legislator, that his mind was wanting in flexibility; or that its first habits were so entirely its masters and so necessary to its successful labors, that it was but little under

his control when called to a new sphere of action and responsibility. The cast of his mind has become thoroughly legal. He wants that easy versatility with which some, even ordinary men, direct their attention to many pursuits with equal success. Moreover, he misses that protecting genius which hovers over the veteran in the courts, to save him from surprises and browbeating, from the assaults of clamorous prejudice, from the charge of public apostasy, and from awkward revelations of his private history. In a court of justice he is perfectly at home, in his natural atmosphere, and surrounded by objects that long custom has made important to the free and prosperous exercise of his powers.

He has been used to argue questions of private right, and finds it hard, in the senate, to spread his mind over the broad and various ground of public expediency. He has been accustomed to reason upon indisputable principles and to feel himself safe in old decrees. Now, he is called to give equal respect to general considerations of policy, which have no warrant but such as they may find or create in each man's judgment or opinion. In a court, he felt his character and interest somewhat involved in carrying every point he maintained. But now this selfish stimulus must give way to what, after deliberate consultation with his fellows, he thinks to be most prudent.

Such are some of the distinctions between the legal and political orator; and such, I believe, is the familiar theory respecting their influence.— As you will certainly find that some of the greatest statesmen have also been the greatest of lawyers, you are to consider whether they became politically eminent in spite of their profession, or by virtue of it, or (to be perfectly safe) whether it was not, in their case, a wholly indifferent matter.

## ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT.—REASONS FOR PREACHING.

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MEN are not willing to think that any means of moral influence could be a wholly new thing in the world, at so late a day as the birth of Christianity. The need of such an influence had always existed, and we naturally look for early attempts of some kind to meet it. No doubt there had been such attempts, and it would be pleasing to trace them if we had a series of facts to guide us. Meanwhile, we may suppose the patriarch to be the religious teacher of his family and dependents, though it be also his office to superintend the sacrifices, the processions, and the sacred observances generally. The legislator inserts moral and religious truths among the ordinary provisions of his civil code. Poets and wise men are, in their various ways, instructors of the simple or rude barbarians. There is reason to believe that the world has never been left

without some to insist upon the claims of conscience and the distinctions between right and wrong.

Still, we are far from anything like a regular, recognized system of teaching religious truths to the people.

In the ancient schools of philosophy, there were eloquent instructors in ethics, and many inquirers into divine mysteries. But generally the instruction was addressed to a select number of followers, and, probably, even to them rather as part of a learned education, than as furnishing rules and motives of conduct. However this may have been, it would not have been safe for the philosopher to denounce openly the gross faith and practice, which, under the name of religion, had become consecrated in the eyes of the people.

Amongst the Jews, there had been of old time a kind of public preaching which, in its design at least, resembles our sermons. I refer to the exhortation, warning and instruction, which the prophets addressed to their countrymen as religious beings. The prophetic eloquence has never been equalled for the tenderness of its persuasion, and the terrors of its remonstrances and denunciations.

In the later days of the Jewish state, we hear of synagogues, in which, besides stated worship, the law was read and expounded, and religious



instruction given to the people at appointed times. This service resembles, if it may not be considered as the model of our Sunday observances.

These brief notes suggest that what we call preaching may have existed, in some more or less perfect form, for ages before the coming of Christ, and therefore may be considered as a natural method of supplying a public want, at a time when there could have been but few readers. We may add, as somewhat confirming this view, that stated preaching was an ordinary means of upholding and spreading Islamism, both under Mahomet and the early caliphs.

The history of the pulpit belongs to other hands. I may say, however, that if Christian preaching have not the stamp of absolute originality, yet certainly this fourth department of oratory, known to us by the name of Pulpit Eloquence, has a character and importance which distinguish it from other modes of religious instruction, and authorize us to consider it as peculiarly our own. It is associated with all our modern history and improvement. It has its profession of orators, with a new system of rhetorical preparation. It has its appointed occasions and its peculiar audiences. It has created for itself schools of learning never surpassed in other professions. And,

finally, it has established a distinct and eminent department of literature.

The institution of public preaching is easily accounted for at the first promulgation of the new faith, when there was no press to spread the religion, and when indeed the multitude, whom it specially sought out, were generally uneducated and must have depended for knowledge very much upon oral teaching. The last reason applies also to the attempts to introduce Christianity among the ignorant heathen of our own time. But why does the custom continue and prevail in the most enlightened countries of the earth, where the Bible may be in every man's hand and most men can read? Is the preacher as necessary now, and will he continue to be as necessary as he once was? Is it not from habit and fashion, or from love of excitement in a throng, that we still require the sermon to follow our acts of devotion on the sabbath, and still choose our minister with no small regard to his powers as a speaker and writer?

These questions will be sufficiently answered, if it should be made to appear that the pulpit has been established and continued as a means of moral and religious influence, just as naturally and necessarily as the occasions of secular eloquence exist for their peculiar purposes. The lawyer and debater are as well known among

us as they were in the most enlightened eras of paganism. All the improvements which distinguished modern society have not made their services superfluous. We might, indeed, have prophesied that it would be otherwise. The probabilities were not small that as men became more and more readers and thinkers, public oral addresses would be less required. But we do not find it to be so, though we may perhaps find that the character and style of these addresses are somewhat changed.

The idea that increased knowledge, whether secular or religious, from reading, will make preaching less important, must take for granted that the adoption of one means of improvement tends to lessen the value of another and a very different means. It probably supposes, too, that, since we may study other things to advantage in books and by ourselves, so the whole subject of religion may be equally well studied in private. Hence we may gradually be required to admit that the design and uses of Christianity are limited and calculable; so that after a certain amount of investigation we shall have learned our lesson and done with it, as with any course of preparatory training. That is,—the more the race is elevated by moral and intellectual influences, the less concern they have with the means. These grow obsolete; and our enlarged capacities and

multiplied desires must seek new objects and methods.

We need not try to exhaust the concessions which such a theory requires. It is enough for our purpose that the Christian world has thus partaken a different view of the matter, and will probably entertain it till changes come in our moral condition which are now only hoped for. But suppose it to be true that in this age of readers men do go, very generally, to books for light upon many religious subjects, and for increased animation to their Christian motives and hopes. Yet the fact must not be overlooked that they do so under constant excitement and direction from the pulpit,—that its voice is sounding as loudly and earnestly in our learned ears, as once in those of the unlettered converts of the first age. What would become of our religious inquiries if the voice ceased, we cannot say. They might be continued in the schools of philosophers.

Under any circumstances, however, it is idle to suppose that the great body of men do or can prosecute theological reading to any considerable extent. And yet, in advanced society and amidst the ceaseless flashing of ideas and theories, the minds of even the unlearned are made inquisitive by all that surrounds them, and restless and unhappy under the perplexities of partial knowledge and eager curiosity. They

are in peril from the errors of belief and the vacancy of scepticism. Here then we see the necessity of a wise and eloquent clergy in an improved age, and growing out of its improvement ; a necessity as strong at least as could be felt in the rudest times.

But leaving considerations like these, which relate wholly to differences in the state of society, — the true ground to be taken is that the usefulness and necessity of preaching are founded in the nature and objects of Christianity, and in the common condition and wants of men. I shall speak of one or two points belonging to this class of reasons, and I select those which are connected with the purpose of all eloquence.

The first point is that the religion is intended to affect human conduct. The preacher aims just as decidedly at influence over his hearers' actions as any other orator. Something is to come of the sermon ; something is to be done. The method, too, is the same. An effect is to be produced by presenting adequate motives to the excitable, impressible nature of man. Christianity is as far as possible from being a merely solitary, sentimental, speculative faith. It is a power which overlooks all human affairs to control them. We cannot place a man, or society, or their interests in a single point of view, in which eloquence of any kind would be

useful, and not find that the eloquence of Christian teaching would be useful too. If truth needs illumination, if duty needs impulse, if doubt craves assurance, if good and evil universally, here and hereafter, in respect to individuals or masses, call for consideration, judgment and action, and these are proper subjects of eloquence of any kind, so are they proper subjects of sacred eloquence.

If, indeed, religious truth were still the imperfect attainment of the retired philosopher of pagan antiquity, or the glorious vision only of poetical imagination and fervor, it might be left to the dreams and speculations of each individual, or at best be taught to the initiated few in the school of the sage. But Christianity has gone forth as an authoritative declaration to all, laying obligations on all, presenting good and denouncing evil to all. It has brought all together upon a great common concern. Then it is clearly a proper subject of eloquence the most popular, and demands it as a most natural means of power.

But how can this be? Eloquence leading to action, popular eloquence too, without votes or verdicts? Certainly. What eloquence can be more justly called popular than that which presents a common and exciting motive to a throng of hearers? That the motive is spiritual, that it is higher than one whose whole range is the

present world and the present hour, makes no difference to the orator's disadvantage, except that it creates for him some peculiar difficulties. It is true, that the action contemplated is not the same, nor does it show itself in the same way, as in secular bodies. We are not assembled to deliberate and decide upon our obligations as Christians, or the formation of Christian character, as we meet and decide upon public measures. Properly speaking, the hearers are not engaged upon a strictly joint interest; they are not looking round for signs of agreement and sympathy. Yet the interest is common to all, of equal moment to all, and so felt to be by the orator and by every hearer. It will not be disputed that the action contemplated is strictly individual, and not for to-day or upon the spot merely. It is habitual action, proceeding from an ever-living and ever-active principle. This must be admitted, with all its supposed disadvantages to the orator. Some, no doubt, will say that the preacher's aim and therefore his eloquence must be vague and dreamy, with no direct, external, joint interest to concentrate and quicken his powers. Others will think that it is enough that conscience, memory, affection, hope and fear are as open to him as to any other orator, or to any class of writers. I here leave this topic, as my object is merely to show that the eloquence of the pulpit has, in



principle, the same basis with every other department.

Another argument for the same thing, is that the truths, which are the preacher's subjects, need impressive inculcation. Unlike the questions that occupy other assemblies, his topics are of equal importance every hour of a man's life. The people are not convoked occasionally to consider them ; but the sermon is a frequent, stated address, and generally connected with the regular seasons of public worship. All is calm, orderly, expected, consecrated. The hearer is, in general, not even a doubter, but comes to receive. In this state of things, the first idea that occurs is, that a subject of equal importance at all times must grow lifeless ; and yet, if it is at all times of infinite importance, it must be perpetually insisted on. Hence, regular preaching is established ; but, from its uniformity, the preaching is in danger of becoming as lifeless as the subject. With these antithetical difficulties and motives before us, we might be in doubt what course of teaching should be appointed. But the custom of the church for so many centuries is reasonable evidence that the proper means have been applied to meet the difficulties and secure the advantages that might be expected. The only thing required is, that the preaching be impressive ; and to make it so, we

must withhold no outward help which belongs to so great a public ministration.

There can be no doubt what men generally think of the custom. They show by their regular attendance their belief that, however well they may inform themselves in their faith by private study, they are not likely to do it with so direct reference to character and conduct, the impression will not be so strong and fixed, as if they also came frequently together as worshippers and were afterwards instructed by an eloquent preacher. They have reasons for this conviction. There is impressiveness in the mere assembling and decent attention, an acknowledgment of the importance of the occasion. A sort of public sanction is given to it. A refined, spiritual exercise is confessed to have weight and value among the pressing engagements of common life. The religion is seen to have a social quality, not only in leading men privately to confession of faults, to the confiding of doubts, and to expressions of sympathy and mutual encouragement, but to united prayer in the congregation and respectful attention to public religious instruction.

In whatever view we take of man, he appears to need assistance of some kind from others, and this holds true even in that most personal concern, the religious preparation of the heart.

We gain something from seeing the operation of religious faith in another human being; the direction it gives to his faculties, the color it takes from his temper of mind, and which it imparts to both his hopes and his fears. It is no small, and it is no degrading help which the presence of a good man lends to others. His fervor, his confidence, his humility gives them strength. To be near him in the preaching of his daily life and the fervid persuasions and warnings of his discourse, is to be in the way of having faith warmed into action, and conscience brought to a test which we may have shunned or never known.

This is not our fond, weak over-estimate of a mere fellow-creature, but our submission to a natural influence over the heart. We are not to go to church that we may catch sympathy and fervor from a crowd, which we shall never experience elsewhere; or to suppose that secret meditation will be less necessary because we can so easily obtain thoughts and impulses from a popular preacher. One great office of preaching is to follow up with every hearer his private meditations and his opening affections, and give him motive and aid to carry on by himself the work which each one has to do for himself. But we wish the preacher to be kindled by the presence of numbers like any other orator, be-

cause there is a power in eloquence thus inspired which is sure to go to the heart, and which could not be dispensed with, even if it were possible for a friendly and gifted teacher to say the same things to every one in private, which he addresses to the congregation from the pulpit.

## ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT.—THE PREACHER AND HIS AUDIENCE.

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LET us consider the opportunity which the preacher enjoys for the exercise of his art; and first, what may be called the external peculiarities of pulpit oratory.

The place in which he meets his hearers is consecrated. I do not mean that the prayers of priests and people have given a sanctity to wood or stone, or that man should tremble before the work of his own hand, and deem even the vilest criminal exempt from human punishment, if he can but flee to the precincts of the temple and lay hold on the horns of the altar. The place is holy because of the purpose to which it is devoted, of the services performed and the Being invoked there;—that is, it is sacred only in our minds. No matter whether we meet in the old gothic cathedral, or in the humble edifice of the puritan, which has little besides its meanness to distinguish it from ordinary buildings;—the place has its sacred associations, and suggests

religious thoughts. Such was paradise to Adam. When he is about to be driven from the garden, his first feeling is that he is to leave the sacred haunts where he had communed with God.

‘This most afflicts me, that, departing hence,  
As from his face I shall be hid, depriv’d  
His blessed countenance. Here I could frequent  
With worship place by place where he vouchsaf’d  
Presence divine ; and to my sons relate,  
“On this mount he appeared ; under this tree  
Stood visible ; among these pines his voice  
I heard ; here with him at this fountain talk’d.”’

‘It was the advice of a holy monk to his friend to perform his customary devotion in a constant place, because in that place we usually meet with those very thoughts which possessed us at our last being there.’\* In this way, our religious exercises, however interrupted and distant from each other, become united and almost one act, and the religious sentiment a continued, growing devotion, instead of a solitary, violent and passing impulse.

But, besides the place, we have set apart a day for the special observance of religion, — a stated season, frequently returning, to which our minds are habitually directed, and for which we may make preparation. We are not taken suddenly from the common pleasures and cares of the world, to engage in services as opposite to many

\* Southey’s Life of Wesley, Vol. I. p. 55.

of them as rain to drought. We have time to lay by all that has disgusted or wearied us in our ordinary life, and to enter with freshness and composure upon spiritual exercises.

In the next place, contrast the audience with those you are accustomed to meet in many other places; the seriousness, the silence, the heartfelt or the habitual respect for the speaker, who alone conducts the services, with the turbulence and rancor which are often seen in other assemblies. In the church we have no controversy. The prophet is unanswered; — not because he has a message from heaven which may not be gainsaid, for he is as uninspired, and may be as fallible as any one he addresses: but we think it more becoming in the house of God that the errors, if they be such, of the preacher should be heard, than the errors, as they may be, of many excited disputants. No evil has arisen, that we know, from deferring controversy till some other time.

This exemption from all liability to answer on the spot for what the preacher says, is undoubtedly unfavorable to such excitement on the part of the audience, as we feel in a court or legislative assembly, where our spirits may be kept up for hours by the succession of speakers and their personal altercations, and by the interest we take in the success of some particular individual, to whom accident, friendship, party-feeling, or it may be his very eloquence, has made us wish



well. But such excitement and interest are not expected or desired in churches. They are alien to the purpose of preaching.

The clergyman's freedom from controversy, when in the pulpit, may make him indolent. He has one motive the less for putting his powers to their utmost stretch, and using only prudent argument and guarded language, — inasmuch as a watchful antagonist is either not by, or else not at liberty to expose his fallacies or his imbecility. Some may suppose that a feeling of security like this is an inducement to men of moderate abilities and intrepidity, to choose the clerical profession rather than one which is strictly polemical. They first form an exorbitant idea of the talent for extemporaneous dispute; and when they see many, who give no evidence of this talent, do very well as preachers, they are disposed to think the profession a quiet and undistinguished calling, in which ordinary men find shelter and able men are buried. A lawyer, they will tell you, is sure to be thoroughly tried by the close, keen combat to which he is subjected with his opponent, before sensible jurors, experienced judges, and his scrutinizing brethren within the bar. If he wants ability, he cannot escape detection. And yet no one will dispute that second-rate men have been successful lawyers. The fact seems to be, that the quantity of talent to be found in any profession, depends upon the

inducements it holds out to talent. Worldly gains and splendor, together with the liberty of doing very much as we please, belong to the secular professions ; and I apprehend that more of our race are disposed to do good to society, with profit and convenience to themselves and heir families, than from motives wholly disinterested. As for the exercise of ability, I believe there is as much room for it in a sermon as in addresses of any kind. And if there be a smaller amount in the clerical profession than in the others, we must not seek the cause in the temptation, which an entire exemption from controversy presents to the timid and weak to become preachers.

The advantage which this exemption gives the clergyman, is obvious. There is no interruption to impair the force of his arguments, statements and appeals. He marks out his course to suit himself, and follows it from choice and with confidence. The dissatisfied hearer will yet listen to the end, if it be only to confirm himself in his opinion ; and, in listening to the end, he may find weak places in his own faith and strong ones in that he dissents from, which he had never been aware of, and which he might have been slow to acknowledge even to himself, if the light had first broken upon him in a heated controversy.

Thus the preacher's privilege appears to be

unequalled of giving entire effect to his views ; of making the whole impression which he has any right to demand for them ; of bringing his hearers' minds, however slowly, into a state favorable to the points he is urging. And let him not boast of his privilege and influence, nor abuse them, for he is doing good or evil for both worlds. If his audience have consented to forget in his presence the pride of debate and the joy of victory ; if they have drawn off their thoughts from objects that fill or divert them in the week, that they may give him their whole minds ; if habit has taught them to look upon him as separate from common life, and almost as a holy man, so that all he says in the church or in private, seems entitled to a peculiar deference ;—his responsibility is only made the heavier, and the lesson of prudence and humility should be sooner learned from it, than that of pride or ostentation.

There is one point more in which the assembly of worshippers differs from almost every other. They are not only to abstain from every expression of disapprobation, but also from applause. We are told that in the early church the people were encouraged to applaud, in order to signify to the preacher that they understood what he was about. But it so often happened that their admiration was misplaced or disorderly that the custom fell into discredit. For a different purpose, we presume, some gentle murmur

or hum of favor was allowed to breathe and swell in the English churches as late as the close of the seventeenth century. We hear nothing of it now. The world is supposed to be growing wiser when it suppresses some of its fashions. But the evidence seems imperfect when we think of those which succeed and of many which remain. Applause in churches would now be esteemed anything but a compliment to the speaker, or an evidence of good taste or intelligence in his hearers. This is in no respect a proof that we are a more devout people than the Christians of former times; though it certainly argues a more spiritual and informed mind to listen silently to grave discourse, and to preach fervently without the slightest sound of favor from the audience.

I have thus attempted to point out some of the circumstances under which the pulpit orator meets his hearers. In some sense, as we have seen, he addresses a popular assembly, since all are upon a level, for the time at least, and equally involved in the responsibilities and issues of the occasion. But, on the other hand, he is not appealing to them to accomplish any private purpose; to carry a point that is in any way connected with his ambition or gains, or indeed with any interests but those of his hearers. His whole object is their good. He regards them as individuals, and converses with every man's heart,

as if he had come there to address a particular hearer. He regards them in every relation of life and in every variety of mind or condition, — as members of families and subjects of the state; as laborers, as men of wealth and power, as ignorant and enlightened; and tells them that there is but one test of virtue, one perfect wisdom, one essential happiness for all.

Whatever he may have to contend against in the listlessness produced by regular, stated returns of the days of meeting together, or by the frequent recurrence of similar topics of discourse, is at least compensated by the motive of their assembling. He cannot look at a single object, or call up one ordinary thought that is naturally associated with the place and the occasion, which will not remind him of his duties and strengthen him for their discharge. In some other assembly, the speaker may be exhilarated by the sight of new faces. A new throng has come that has never paid him homage; and he burns for fresh incense. But here, the same eyes are bent upon him year after year, or the vacant seat tells him of one gone to his account. The monition never fails him that there is enough here for ambition, and love, and self-devotion.

If he should ask himself what, in point of fact, is the popular estimation in which preaching is held, he will find nothing to depress him, nothing to turn the scale in favor of other classes of ora-

tors. What public meetings are better attended than those of our churches? What exercises are more respected or more generally exciting? It is only on rare occasions that you see the galleries of the hall of legislation or of the courtroom crowded. It is next to impossible to collect an audience for the orators who deliver the stated discourses before and in behalf of some charitable institution, unless indeed there is reason to expect some extraordinary display of eloquence. We must get up splendid military processions and secure the attendance of the chief men of the state, before we can prevail upon any considerable number of citizens to assemble and hear a discourse, once in a year, upon the Declaration of our Independence, and the weighty consequences of that measure. Even the theatre, established expressly for public amusement, and certainly not a very expensive mode of contributing to it, has but a fluctuating popularity, as uncertain as fashion itself.

The case is far otherwise with the public exercises of Sunday. The attraction of oratory is far less needed to secure attendance. We behold, as it were, a larger family assembled, as a matter of course, about a domestic altar. And not only the weary laborers, who may rejoice in a day of rest and meditation, but the rich, the learned, the powerful, are regular, attentive, respectful hearers in the house of worship,—all

equally ready, of their penury and of their abundance, to cast in their offerings for the support of ministers, the erection of temples, and the wider and more efficient diffusion of religious truth.



## ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT.—THE PREACHER'S RESOURCES.

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IN treating of this and the other departments of eloquence, I have tried, when speaking of a profession and its topics, to consider them only so far as they related to the orator. My attempt, I fear, has been little successful. It would probably be still less so with such a subject before me as the resources of a pulpit orator, did I not mean to limit myself to those only which exist in his own mind, and to a single view only of these.

I have sometimes thought that, among many serious persons, there was an indefinite notion of some peculiar responsibility and peril hanging over the preacher, not merely in the choice of his profession, but also in his use of and his reliance upon his own gifts. Pride and self-confidence would be so unseemly in an office like his, and self-abasement so natural a consequence of proper views of his duty, that some have even insisted that the voice should not speak but in

conscious obedience to a mysterious summons, and that preparation for his work would be as unsuitable in a modern divine, as in the first disciples when they were sent forth to preach. I do not refer to extreme views like these, which probably exercise but a limited influence in practice. Indeed, your own observation of the diversity in preachers may have satisfied you that they generally feel at liberty to preach according to their gift. But a certain vague feeling on the subject in some minds, arising perhaps from the supernatural origin and imposing character of the religion, may justify a brief inquiry.

What, then, are the resources within himself which the preacher may rightfully employ? How far may he exhibit his character and genius and rely upon his own powers, in delivering a message from God himself? Did the promulgator of the religion intend that its first influence and effect should be to break down all that is peculiar in men's minds, all that gives individuality to their temper, taste and views; to spread through the world one unvarying spirit, which should make the actions, the language, the expectations of each one, in all that concerned in any way his religion, precisely like those of his neighbor? Was it thought that the revelation was so vast and overpowering, that the mind must needs sink under it; that instead of bring-

ing human genius boldly to the study and elucidation of truths which were so far beyond its unaided reach, we had nothing to do now but to contemplate and obey in spiritual silence, as the passive recipients of a sublime but oppressive revelation ?

We have reason to think that this was no part of the design of Christianity, both from its illustration in the characters we are familiar with in the New Testament, and from the obvious tendency and effect of its instructions, its examples, and its unfolded hopes. Instead of bearing heavily upon a man's sense of intellectual force, or imprisoning the imagination, it has made him altogether more ethereal and soaring. And where, as we believe, its genuine influence has reached the heart, it has led to profounder inquiries into man's nature, condition and prospects, than were ever instituted before. Instead of inducing a spirit of devout quiescence, it should seem that we had been roused up by it to the use of all that is good, and, in our perverseness, of all that is bad in the form of persuasion and argument, to bring the great subject home to every one.

Then, again, it is so far from making the human character tame and monotonous, that it requires and promotes the utmost strength of purpose and energy of enterprise, and offers the mind such objects of thought and desire, as en-

courage and almost compel it to act nature out to the full. You find as strong and as large a variety of genius in the bards and prophets of Judea, as in the poets of Greece or of England. They are full of human affections and passions ; they are warmed and spiritualized by the glories of the outward world ; yet their language is that of men who felt themselves to be always in the divine presence. Of the apostles, who received the first influences of Christianity, and lived, all but one, in the society of their master, no one was required to part with the natural temper of his mind, except so far as it was bad. One preaches with the learning and ingenuity of a philosopher, and gives vent to deep human feeling in warm human speech ; and another wins men by affectionate persuasion, encouragement and counsel.

We see at once the importance of leaving to the preacher the free exercise of his natural powers and feelings ; for with him, as with every other orator, eloquence must come from our common nature. The great preacher is not formed in his library or in the cloister. Devotional sentiment and sincere purposes of doing good to others, are not all that is required to make him eloquent, though they are potent inspirers of eloquence. He must join to these the power of presenting truth and motives in the way that we require. If he has the true spirit of

a benefactor, he will be so far from thinking that the greatness of his theme disdains human aid or human weakness, that he will spare no honest use of his art to bring it down or near to every mind. He will never forget our necessities. He will humble himself to meet them. If he should, or, rather, if he could lay by our common nature when he comes to address us, what connection would he have with us? Through what inlet shall he find a way to our hearts? He may have the gift of tongues, and yet know little of the action of men's minds, or of the topics best fitted to make impression, or of the manner in which alone objects can be effectively brought before the imagination.

We are right then in expecting from the pulpit orator as much of natural character, of genius, or of any proper resource, as a man would show on any subject and occasion, where he was thoroughly in earnest, and wanted to produce an important effect. We are right to expect in sacred eloquence as great variety of style in speaking and writing, corresponding to the subject and the orator's temperament, as in any kind of public discourse. We know that the religious principle is allied to the whole spiritual and intellectual nature of man; and it is but natural that when we treat of religious subjects, we should address ourselves to his whole higher nature. We know that men need to be drawn

even to those things which most concern them ;  
and we are therefore glad to see the highest  
popular endowments and accomplishments  
brought to the service.

## LITERARY TRIBUNALS.

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WHEN we hear it said that the character of a literary work is established, that it is a classic, a part of permanent literature, we are naturally curious to learn what is the authority that determines the point. From what quarter does the decision proceed? The common answer is, Public Opinion, the general sense of mankind. Johnson, speaking of Gray, says, 'In the character of his Elegy, I rejoice to concur with the common reader; for by the common sense of readers uncorrupted with literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtilty and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetical honors.' Let us inquire into the authority here set up.

We first take it for granted that an opinion, whether held by an individual, by a school, or by the whole world, has no weight in settling a principle, except so far as the judge is competent to pass upon the matter, and unless he has given



to it all the consideration it requires; and that in no case does the decision make a thing to be true or constitute truth, though it may properly be cited for what it is worth, in evidence or proof.

Public opinion, however, differs from the opinion of one man or a few in this,—that it may settle questions, though it may not settle principles. Here, for a time at least, its power seems next to infinite. It differs in another respect; for, however wrong it may be, it is always instructive, and the more instructive the longer the error has prevailed. There can be but little that is spasmodic or capricious in a case like this; and, probably, there is nothing of what is commonly called accidental. We may profitably study laws and tendencies of the mind when we carefully observe the origin, growth and tenacity of errors which have taken possession of whole communities. We may find in them an explanation of many obscurities which perplex the history of institutions and manners, and also of the direction which passionate public effort has at times taken. An equal obstinacy of error in an individual, might properly be imputed to diseased or perverted intellect,—to mere idiosyncrasy.—At last, the cloud, which had hung over the world, breaks; and then we may study the mind farther, in its return to truth, or, quite as probably, in its

conquest of higher truth than had ever been grasped before. Under no circumstances, then, can it be wise to speak lightly of that undefined power called public opinion.

The question of competency in respect to the tribunal still remains. No one, we suppose, will contend that public opinion is equally authoritative in all cases. Where an appeal is fitly made to our common instincts, affections, wants, — to our common experience, — the response of intuition and sympathy will confirm it, and no one thinks that other evidence is needed to warrant his receiving the decision. But there are mixed cases, not less in common life than in literature, which have strong points of interest for very different classes of men. Among these are some points of a strictly popular character, which account sufficiently for the part that the people take when the time comes for their making up an opinion, and for acting, should that course be necessary.

Thus in a political revolution; — a nation, we will suppose, has for ages been kept in ignorance, accustomed to do and bear wrong for the glory of one man or of a few; and to regard such a life, which seemed beyond remedy or alleviation, as the natural doom of the great mass of mankind. In the course of time an indignant spirit is seen growing among the people. They begin to dream of a power

within them, and of something they might do and enjoy if they were once rid of this old oppression. The moment for resistance comes and a successful blow is struck. In all this we may have discerned only the mighty will and power of the whole people, and we may think the change well enough accounted for by the exertion of their power. But we cannot doubt that some other agency was all the time at work, which had nothing of a popular element, and without which the great enterprise might have utterly failed. We must not overlook the machinations or the prudent counsels of a few, who could read men and the times well, take advantage of accidents, seize the moment when the feeling of resistance could be safely changed to a purpose, and then carry a whole nation into an entirely new condition,—one far beyond what it had ever dreamed of. We must not overlook those from whom the new popular sentiment began, and by whom it was promoted till men could understand the practicableness as well as feel the need of a change; by whom the rude energy with which the change began, was kept up in times of difficulty, and the spirit of the revolution itself so modified and regulated, as to become with safety a part of the permanent character of the people.

Here, certainly, we have the expressed will of the greater number, and to a certain extent the

fruit of an opinion formed by themselves upon a matter they could understand. Yet how much were they acting under a control which they did not comprehend or think of disputing.

In literature, a considerable proportion of standard works are strictly popular and equally favorites with all classes of readers. There are national epics, national songs; there are plays, fables and novels which have at once and forever taken possession of the hearts and memories of the barbarian, the slave, the uneducated, of every man who could read or hear. No one waited for the sanction of a man of literary pretensions. Indeed, the highest critics are here found to be as good 'common readers,' as hearty lovers of the people's fare, as Johnson could desire. Surely this is a case where the popular suffrage has been fairly given, and on the side of good taste. Hence it may be supposed that the products of unquestionable genius and sincere passion must be marked with a simplicity and obviousness that will make them comprehensible by all; that being the growth of nature they will be instinctively perceived and felt by the common nature in men; and that the best criterion of literary excellence will be the consent of plain, unsophisticated readers. So that if there be difficulty or mystery, it must be taken for a fault; and scholars and critics are but magnifying

their office and assuming importance to themselves when they profess to discover anything in a general favorite which has not struck the mass of readers.

We know that a writer of the highest genius is often a universal idol and deserves to be such. And we readily explain his popularity. Perhaps he is naturally fond of such images and relations as are presented by daily life and common scenes. He gives us adventures and characters and changing fortunes, he delineates passions and motives which go directly to the heart of every man, and the more readily for the singular completeness, warmth and simplicity of the composition. The tone of his reflections is gentle, kind and manly. He is a lover of his race with all their faults and almost because of their faults, bound up as they are with trials, weakness and sorrow. As the reader meets everywhere with something that harmonizes with his usual feelings and experience, he is agreeably excited, without being aware that he is occupied with anything very new, or that requires capacity and resources much beyond his own to produce it. If his natural feelings of wonder or his deepest passions are roused, yet, as no false stimulants are applied, he is moved in much the same manner that he would be by real events of an extraordinary character.

The points of popular attraction might easily

be multiplied ; but it is enough for our purpose that this poem, novel, play, history, or by whatever name the book may be called, marked all over as it is with originality and profoundness, has yet a great deal that is obvious to every eye. Must we thence infer that popular admiration is evidence of the genius or art that pervades the work? Might not the same effect or equal delight be produced by ordinary writers with an attractive subject? There can be no doubt that this wide-spread interest is in part owing to the power and skill of the author. The productions of a great painter are not without effect upon the common eye, though it might be more gratified by a vast, gorgeous panorama. The simple and much-loved book, we may safely say, has enough for all. Nature or truth is the source of all the favor it enjoys ; but when can any man say that all the depths of nature have been sounded? Have none found in the book more than its most palpable charm? Is there nothing more to come to light? It passes down to other ages. Its language perhaps is no longer spoken and it can no longer be in the hands of common readers. Yet the student, never weary of poring upon its wonders, thinks he sees in its unabated and even growing power over literature, something more than the manifest attraction that won the multitude at the beginning. He believes that what is least ob-



vious in it is just as natural and true as what is most easily perceived, and far more precious. He sees in what is least obtrusive a beautiful exhibition of the man's peculiar spirit, the highest evidence that he could give of the power of genius; and moreover, he is ready to predict that it is the very quality of his writings which in the end will have most effect on the literature of the world. In fine, he learns that a work of genius in literature, as in the elegant arts generally, must be studied patiently and long, if we would possess ourselves of the greater part of its highest merits, and make it a pleasure and blessing all our lives. He learns to think less and less of his first impressions; and even the obvious practical benefit to be derived from it fades in the opening light of its nobler qualities and uses.

Thus it is that a work such as we have described operates upon a variety of minds. The view here taken will not disturb the placid enjoyment of readers who are satisfied with the charm that plays on the surface or breathes in the air of a long-loved poem; and the differently constituted reader, who likes to analyze his pleasures, may be allowed to think that he daily discovers a profounder import or a more subtile beauty.

We have now considered the fortunes of a book acknowledged to be popular, and suggested



that it may give higher pleasures than are commonly received and hence have higher qualities than are commonly recognized. The presumption is not unreasonable that a book which is wholly unconsidered by the generality, indeed wholly unknown to them, may yet be among the highest and most influential in the nation's literature. Accordingly, we come next to writings that have not the popular element, but are dark and difficult, and never can look for rank to general estimation. Of course we do not refer to works of science or profound learning. In respect to these, men are pretty generally agreed to surrender all questions of right and merit to the authority of the masters. We are grateful to them if we can but comprehend the results; and when this seems impossible, we readily take them upon trust.

We will not attempt to enumerate the varieties and causes of obscure communication of thought. Sometimes it seems wilful; sometimes it shows want of training and practice; sometimes it is owing to the nature of the inquiry and the peculiar temperament or habits of the thinker. Let us suppose a retired, abstracted person, ever pondering remote truths, and fond of studying man in general by profound and severe researches into his own mind. Perhaps he lights suddenly upon principles and, in his happy contemplation of them, he does not

dream how hard it may be to bring them within the comprehension of minds that have not his activity and grasp, or that quick sensibility which makes hints luminous and expands them readily into full dimension. Besides then the novelty and strangeness of his views, which may well prevent general sympathy, his method of laying them before us is unfavorable to impression. He utters perhaps the greatest thoughts with a brief familiarity that excites no suspicion in most minds how vast is the content of these few words, or with a bold incompleteness that confounds while it animates the reader, and which often proves that the writer himself has not yet perceived the whole importance of his own discovery. There can be no dispute that part of the difficulty of comprehending him is owing to himself; but probably under any circumstances he would not be generally understood. At any rate, if we would not be losers, we must take him as he is and make the most of him we can.

Of one thing we may be very sure, that a writer of this character little troubles himself to learn whether he shall have an audience. It is enough for him that he has thoughts which must be followed out and in some way recorded, though the toil be solitary and his conceptions be doomed to long obscurity. Possibly the interpretation may come; and he can wait as

patiently for it as the world. But who shall be the interpreters? He has thus far educated none for his purpose. Yet some may be growing up round him, — his unknown disciples, — impatient like himself of drowsy acquiescence in systems and methods of inquiry that did their work ages ago without raising up worthy successors. They turn to the strange light with instinctive alacrity. The seed that slept in crypts or deep in the soil is at last visited by the life-giving power. The utterer of cloudy oracles has at last touched ears that can hear. And why should not these peculiar spirits be cared for? Why have not they as good right to be fed and expanded by the only influence that can reach to the depths of their nature, as the rest of the world to be ministered to by such instruction as they need and can profit by? This may look at first a little exclusive and selfish. The few favored ones are shutting in the truth from the common eye and touch, and making it the property of the master's inner school. No, indeed. They are preparing to teach it. They will by-and-by proclaim it from the house-top. Though working in the spirit of their great friend, they can come nearer than he to the common wants of their kind. No truth, no power can be kept from men's hands and use if they are but able to receive it. It will find its way down to thousands and do them good,

though they may never know its source or history, or even be able to say precisely what it is.

By one form or another of obscurity, difficulty, mysticism, we may in part explain the want of popularity of philosophers and poets who are to some men the highest of studies and delights. Nobody is to blame for this state of things; and, unpromising as it may seem, we may possibly owe to it an amount of mental activity and independence, and a direction of human inquiry that the world could ill have spared.

It seems, then, that we leave the highest criticism in literature in very few hands; not, however, in the hands of monopolists or exclusives, but of the only true radicals, — the men who aim at realizing great ideas, and who believe that much remains and ever will remain to be learned and told. What in fact is the power exercised by those whom we have presumed to regard as our highest literary judges, and how is it esteemed by the reading world generally? The critical decrees or awards, which bear the strongest marks of trustworthiness and stability, are not made up in a self-summoned conclave and thence promulgated. There is no club or set into which some are chosen while others are excluded. There is no forcing of dogmas or peculiar sentiments on men. The silent current of individual opinion makes its way, and readers

fall in with it because they like it. They are pleased with the impulse and guidance that direct them to hidden truth and beauty; and they cannot with so much propriety be said to obey the decree of a master as the decision of their own instructed minds and natural feelings. That the impulse came from others is no discredit to those who receive it. It is no more derogatory to human nature or the order of society that the influence of a few teachers is so great, than that men should be endowed with unequal powers or possess unequal opportunities. This influence is natural and inevitable.

If indeed there were an instance to be found of a long-continued, general dissatisfaction with the clear opinion of those whom we venture to hold up as the most competent judges in literature and the arts; if paintings, statues, temples and public grounds, which had been for ages the admiration of artists, students and cultivated men generally, were beheld with indifference or scorn by the multitude; if the poetry which had held its place in every library and exercised influence and authority upon all subsequent literature, were not simply unknown to the great body of readers, but rejected by them as alien and offensive;—we might be shaken in our confidence in the opinion of those we had respected as masters. We might think that conventionalities or excessive education had done violence

to natural feeling; that favor and blind prejudice had all along given currency to false pretension; and that it was high time to let the unsophisticated into the judgment seat to break the spell of ancient error, and cleanse or sweep away this mass of antiquated impurity. But we find no such case; no setting aside of what are called standard works by the popular voice. And however we may seem to have undervalued this voice in regard to the higher points of art, we cannot but feel that a general acquiescence in the judgments of the more competent is a powerful testimony. The critic is strengthened, his decision sealed by the generality. He believes that he must have discovered in an author the marks of universal and immutable excellence; for not only has he the consent of the few whose studies are like his own, but so far as the public attention has been drawn to such matters, the public feeling is also on his side. Is there no pledge in this, that the decision of such criticism is never to be reversed?

How much more respectable is the intelligent and even grateful acquiescence of less privileged readers, who have small means and uncertain leisure for liberal studies, than the rude dissensions among the most gifted and favored respecting the merits of those of their own craft, — the quarrels of the divinities at their banquet. All our boasted foundation of authoritative judgment



would seem to crumble under our feet, if we did not see that the contents are often merely personal, — often the struggles of schools or parties seeking predominance; and that jealousy, ill-will, prejudice, exclusiveness or perverseness, enters more or less into them all. The substantial differences are slight. No principles are applied, no whole view is taken of anything, and nothing is settled. The long-established name still burns serenely on high, and the bitterly disputed claims of later merit still have a patient hearing in spite of the tumult, and a heartier acknowledgment for the trial they have stood.

Neither are we to be disturbed by the honorable differences among generally competent judges. Sincere and long-existing diversities of taste may greatly perplex the question of right and desert. The ablest, the most fair-minded, the most experienced in libraries and in literary opinion, are often at issue upon matters the most essential. A rare thing is it to find a man who can see and relish everything that bears the mark of genius. We limit our love more than our hate. We are inclined to take that for a blemish which departs from what we are in the habit of admiring, and forget that beauty has varieties not less than the mind. But after the fullest acknowledgment of human imperfection, and conceding all that can fairly be demanded to the uncertainty arising from differences of



opinion, there cannot be a doubt that some works are established forever. We all admit this immortality as to a few, and we all maintain it, too, in behalf of our peculiar favorites. There is then some confidence in the ultimate grounds of human judgment. Taste, however defined, and however corrupted, capricious and narrow it may be, in some men and at certain periods, is yet an original faculty or operation of the mind, and has its laws or principles as fixed as those of any power, and requires, like any power, a thorough cultivation for a full development. So far from being a mere prejudice or fancy, its proper object is never-varying truth and excellence. Those writings, of whatever country or period, which have what for convenience we call the consenting voices of nations and ages,—however great the variety of genius or of the directions it takes,—have this testimony of sound taste in their favor, that they all conform to principles and feelings in men which promise in the long run to be uppermost and prevail. And the criticism that passes upon such writings owes all that can properly be called its authority to its detection and illustration of this conformity. Then is it scientific. Nobody who understands it, questions it, because it bears its own evidence that it is just.

One effect of such views as these of literary tribunals may be to promote a good understand-

ing, and kind, respectful feeling among all classes of readers towards each other. Another effect may be to suggest the evil that would fall on writers, and through them on letters, if the great body of readers were really made the arbiters of literary distinction. The temptation would be irresistible to write down to their capacity and tastes, which would be nearly or quite as fatal as to write up to those of others. All hope and love of the ideal must perish if the author or any artist measures himself and his work by the world without, and determines whether an object is attainable or desirable, by the number of those who will be likely to understand or care about it. Probably no readers, however humble, whose attention has been at all drawn to literature, would thank him for the condescension; so much more agreeable is it to feel one's self growing stronger by exposure to difficulties, and to the influence of grand thoughts intrepidly uttered, than to be nursed into a life-long imbecility.

## FORMS OF CRITICISM.

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IN considering the different forms of criticism, we may take them in any order we please, since there is nothing in their own nature which makes one arrangement preferable to another.

The first we shall consider is not so much marked by any specific distinction as by the manner of offering it. We refer to the private, confidential criticism we receive from a teacher or friend. Consider its advantages to an author preparing something for publication. The suggestions of another, perfectly unreserved suggestions, are made to him in secret, before he has committed himself to general readers, from whom he has little reason to expect clemency, and to whom apologies must generally be offered with an ill grace, since he comes before them as a volunteer, and ought to have prepared himself for the judgment which he knows he must encounter and on which all depends.

Then, although he has the opinion of but one

man, yet the benefit is incalculable of knowing how some other mind is affected by what we have written,—that is, if we care to make impression. We are often but indifferent judges of our own work. Probably all ardent writers look at their composition as they would at their countenances in a mirror. It has been said that when a man is under the influence of some strong feeling which beams in his face, he cannot look at the reflected image, at the luminous and changing expression, without blighting it, and at the same time deadening the emotion which kindled it. He would turn hastily, impatiently to his own heart from what would strike him as a sort of mockery. Consciousness is enough for him. He knows not what the character and expression of his face are. He does not care to know. They are for the use of others, who need them as interpreters of what is passing in his mind.

It is much the same with animated composition. The points of analogy are obvious. A fervid writer knows very little of the best properties of his style; very little of the secret of his most brilliant success. When, after the glow of writing, he looks to see how the written representation of his thoughts appears, he will hardly fail to be disappointed. Many become absolutely disgusted with a composition as soon as the work is done. They have not patience to

take it up again. And we would not have them take it up again, if we could always be sure that a man's honest, hearty words will be as complete and infallible interpreters to others, as the instinctive expression of the face is. Here it must be acknowledged that the analogy fails. There are deficiencies in the medium of language that do not exist in the medium of an honest countenance. And the writer may be as ill-qualified to note such deficiencies as to point out what is good in his style. Hence he will do well to consult a friend, who can take up the manuscript freshly, as a stranger, and advise him if anything be wanting to bring him into more perfect communication with his readers. Instances there are of eminent writers submitting their productions to the judgment of very ordinary persons, to ascertain how they would be likely to affect the common mind. And few authors have passed under the supervision of skilful proof-readers at a printing office, without receiving gratefully the suggestions of such experienced observers of language and style.

The consultation, here recommended, of some friend, is a matter of mere prudence and good common sense. The purpose is to set anything right that may be out of the way. But I am not unaware that some authors seek this consultation with their minds made up; perhaps expecting praise or encouragement, or, perhaps

wishing to know what can be said against them, without the least thought of adopting the friendly hints they may receive. If your ill-fortune should ever bring you into connection with such persons, may you have the sagacity to discern their purpose early, so that you may shun a load of thankless trouble by courteously declining the office of literary adviser.

One obvious advantage of this private criticism is, that it admits of the minutest strictures. There is leisure to correct the slightest inaccuracies and to show the reason for the correction. In this point of view such familiar criticism is particularly important to those who are beginning to write, at a time of life when a habit is easily formed, when the merely mechanical mastery and application of rules may be perfectly acquired, and the perception of accuracy and fitness is readily developed.

But it must be owned that with all the benefits of this friendly criticism, it is the most irksome to which a writer, and especially a young writer, can be subjected. Other strictures may be more galling; but I suspect there are none which a man bears less patiently, than those which require him to part with a favorite word or form of expression, or to alter the arrangement of sentences or clauses, or omit them altogether and perhaps substitute others. He may think, indeed, that no words in the language and no

disposition of them are quite equal to a full expression of his meaning; but, as he has made his selection and done his best, he is unwilling to have a contest with the critic after having suffered enough from his mother tongue. He wonders that others do not and will not see things as he does. He would rather sacrifice the whole composition than make the proposed changes. The sorely tried writer of themes will beg the perhaps not less sorely tried reader to remember Quintilian's almost pathetic caution: '*Ingenia puerorum nimia interim emendationis severitate deficere. Nam et desperant, et dolent, et novissime oderunt, et, quod maxime nocet, dum omnia timent, nihil conantur.*' \*

This extreme sensitiveness is sometimes a mark of vanity or ignorance or obstinacy; but it is often a proof that the sufferer sees something choice and pertinent in a word or arrangement which another is blind to. I regard a strong conviction in such matters as no faint evidence that one is in the right. And in such cases he will quietly follow his own judgment. If he aims at anything like true originality and excellence as a writer, he must have opinions of his own and adhere to them, though always with a liberal deference to those of others, who may have a right to his respect though not to his submission.

\* *Instit. Orat.* II. 4.



I have one remark to make on verbal criticism. As this criticism is devoted to words, and sometimes carried to great length when treating of the use of a mere particle, many are so inconsiderate as to think it pedantic and of little worth, a laborious trifling, a weak scrupulosity about accuracy in particulars that are quite insignificant. I am so far from admitting this that I consider the literary world and the cause of truth much indebted to those diligent philologists who devote their lives to settling the whole history of words and the true reading of doubtful passages. One may smile to see so much care and perseverance devoted to so unostentatious an acquisition; so many manuscripts ransacked and compared to determine some disputed point amongst scholars. But it is a much more pleasing view of the case that men are so differently constituted, that nothing will fail to have some who will give it heed. We want to know the truth in all things; and if great anxiety is sometimes shown to find out the truth in matters of apparently small importance, we have good grounds for believing that it will not be neglected in those of the highest concern.

And what is of higher concern in literature than words? Is it said, the thoughts? But do we not think in words? Do we not speak and write with them? Do they not embody and preserve sentiments, images, feelings and

give them the best, we had almost said the only form, by which a stranger can become acquainted with them? Ask the logician what sign he thinks the most certain that a man has made progress in his art; ask him what he holds to be the surest proof that a man thinks clearly and thoroughly; and he will reply,—the uniformly just use of language. Ask the man of taste, the true critic, how he accounts for the great, the whole impression which he has received from a poem, and he will refer you, in no small measure, to words used with such force and appropriateness, that the slightest change would be as hurtful as throwing a false light on a landscape. True vigor of composition depends as much upon a pervading exactness in what some deem little things, as upon the reverent observance of great principles of style. Hence, the importance of verbal criticism;—not that it can mechanically give us an insight into the life and beauty of words, or the power to summon the only fit ones to serve our purpose; but that it draws attention to their importance and helps us to discriminate their significance.

I pass to several kinds of criticism in which authors are not more interested than readers, and shall speak first of the office of annotators. With one class of these we have no concern in the present discussion; namely, those who

apply themselves to make an old standard work more complete and useful by adding to it, in the form of notes, anything important, connected with the subject, which the author overlooked, or, most commonly, which has come to light or been established since his time. You frequently observe such additions to scientific works, especially those which are professional; and little more than learning and prudence is necessary to make a good annotator of this class. The critical notes to which I now direct your attention are designed to illustrate literary productions, and they sometimes analyze an author's genius and writings, though this office is commonly performed in separate works. Such criticism requires research and a clear perception of all that is peculiar in the subject. The critic must comprehend the genius and temper of his author, the circumstances under which he wrote, the object he aimed at, and, as far as may be, his manner of life, his education and opportunities. He will often be obliged to consider him in connection with his contemporaries and his predecessors, and take a thousand small matters into the account, by which he may explain or reconcile what may appear to be anomalous or contradictory.

Some critics of this class have such a remarkable power of associating themselves with their author,—though of a far distant country

and age, — that it seems as if they must have lived in his society. They do not appear to give us so much the deductions of long and painful inquiry and comparison, as that familiar knowledge which a man unconsciously acquires of one with whom he has been on terms of intimacy all his life. I may mention as somewhat illustrating this kind of criticism, that most original work, the ‘*Horæ Paulinæ*’ of Dr. Paley; a work that cannot be too earnestly recommended to those who are fond of reasoning upon facts — of seeing historical truth clearly and beautifully established by a collection and comparison of minute, artless and scattered particulars. So easily and simply is the work done, that the reader may not even stop to admire the care and skill with which the author has brought together his examples of undesigned coincidence, from the Book of Acts and the Letters of Paul. He finds himself, he hardly knows how, the Apostle’s companion and witness.

To those who are familiar with the ancient classics, I need not mention the labor and acuteness which the moderns have bestowed on them, to restore the text, and to illustrate passages by every help which could be drawn from history, geography, the remains of ancient art and the comparison of different authors, or of the same author with himself.

You know how common it is to publish the early English writers, and especially the poets, with notes and illustrations of various kinds. A large amount of this proffered help is received with little gratitude or patience, and for good reasons. The explanation is often needless and ostentatious, or imperfect where it is really wanted. In many cases, the annotator so exceeds his office as to give us a paraphrase in flat prose of some fine poetical passage, which has already revealed itself to us with full brilliancy and warmth. Besides, how disgusting are the quarrels of these commentators with each other. What have we to do with Pope's contempt or Gifford's snarling, when we have spread out before us the minds of Shakspeare and Jonson? It is bad enough to be obliged to turn our eyes from the text to learn what the note has to say of an obsolete term, an obscure allusion, or a corruption in the text; but it is intolerable to be summoned away by the critic, when we have no need of him, and when we may be sure to find him ill-natured.

The complaint here made is not against notes themselves, but the too common method and spirit in which they are written. The best way to study the early poetry of England is to read as much of it as we can in the best editions, and make ourselves familiar with the writers, and through them, as far as we may, with their

times. When we come to words or allusions that need explanation, we must consult glossaries and notes. Tyrwhitt's edition of the *Canterbury Tales*, contains an excellent specimen of such works of reference. Let your first reading be from the simple text, as pure as you can find, so that the author may have one hope at least of making his own impression. Be slow to look elsewhere for help till you feel that you must have it. It will be time enough to acquire a critical knowledge of perplexing and disputed passages,—and such are commonly of small importance,—when your enthusiasm for an author is so powerful and established that you are unwilling to remain in doubt as to a single word he has written.

There is a class of works, not properly critical, which may have some influence in keeping alive your interest in the earlier writings and assisting you to a better understanding of them. I mean those which give us familiar accounts of the times in illustration of books. They may not be very profound, and there is no reason why they should be; but they are full of curious matter, derived from sources to which many would find it difficult to resort. Such are the collections of D'Israeli and Drake. Of a far higher order, but aiding us in a similar way, are *Lives* of eminent authors. I mean, real *Lives*,—not such faery creations as Mr.

Knight's Biography of Shakspeare, with here and there a fact or a fragment of fact floating in a sea of conjecture ; but substantial accounts of men of whom there is something to say.

But to return to works that are more to our purpose, we next distinguish those, partly historical and partly critical, that treat minutely and comprehensively of the literature of particular ages, or of some one department of literature through successive ages. Here we are made acquainted with obscure authors, who yet had their influence in their day and upon the literature that followed. We have specimens of early writings, the very image of the times, which we might have sought in vain elsewhere. It is hardly necessary to say that the eminent have their naturally commanding position, and are better understood and valued for the close connection we are now able to remark between them and their inferiors, or between the days of almost barbarian and those of cultivated genius. This brief reference must serve for a large and important department of criticism, which, though in some respects allied to others that we have spoken of, has abundance of its own to demand and reward the most ample consideration.

The gravest and most elaborate form of Criticism is seen in philosophical discussions of the subjects of taste, beauty, art, — such as Burke's



‘Inquiry,’ the lectures of Sir Joshua Reynolds and of Fuseli, Alison’s ‘Essays,’ and some of Stewart’s ‘Philosophical Essays.’ However these discussions may differ in points of theory, they all proceed upon the belief that whatever comes within the province of taste has fixed characteristics, distinct, recognized principles, which are more or less exemplified by great artists of every class, and may be constantly turned to use by those who are studying to make themselves perfect in art. They direct the mind to itself to examine what there is in its constitution or action, and abroad to consider what there is in the objects it contemplates, on which the pleasures of taste depend. They teach us that beauty and sublimity are not things of custom, fashion or unstable opinion; that verse and prose, the epic, the drama, the ode, are not arbitrary devices of this or that man to suit himself; but that they are natural methods of answering to some want or some affection.

The tendency of this class of works is to give criticism an enlarged spirit, to make it a point of honor with those who undertake to pass judgment upon a book, to bring right feelings and well-ascertained principles to the examination. Polite literature rises in dignity and value; for the exercise it gives the mind is found to be more than a gay admiration of

elegance, of animated fancies, of the skill one shows in new contrivances of fashion or pleasant departures from the useful and dull. Our favorite literature is to have some effect upon our tempers, opinions and course of life. So that a judicious adviser, if asked what books he would put into the hands of a young scholar to be of service to him in clearing his judgment, quickening his abhorrence of all that is indelicate or vicious, and elevating and multiplying his enjoyments, would name among the best those which explain the secret and influence of our literary pleasures, and which lead us to look as philosophers, as Christians and as men of feeling upon those high exercises of the mind which pass under the general name of taste.

The last kind of criticism to be named seems to be meant for the whole reading world, but authors have in it a special and tender interest, however little it may profit or please them. I refer to literary reviews, a most miscellaneous order of criticism truly, if it can be properly called one order. Under this denomination you will find substantially all or nearly all the classes that I have already tried to discriminate, and a great deal besides. You will meet with many Articles of the highest ability and importance, which, so far from being critical in any sense, are independent discussions of subjects of any kind; the title of a book, more or less connected

with the topic, being prefixed for form's sake. Our concern at present is, of course, with reviews considered as critical examinations of books.

Within the present century, English Reviews have risen to an importance that they never knew before; and the change is so striking an event in recent literary history, it is so truly a distinction of the age, that it receives great consideration from those who carefully observe the times. Instead of short analyses, summaries of literary news and slight strictures, reviews now contain elaborate investigations of the subjects of works, of the genius of authors, the principles of criticism, the faults and beauties of style and language. They note the changes in literature, the fluctuations of popularity, the influence of uncommon minds and striking examples. They aim at comprehensive views, by tracing the connection between the literature of different periods, and the origin and results of great literary revolutions.

Here you see work for the profoundest and best-informed minds; and many such have been willing to rest their influence on such notoriety and permanence as they could secure by anonymous articles in a critical journal. They could not overlook the fact that many an able article must fade from the general mind soon after its publication. But they seem to have thought

it worth consideration that they had the opportunity to put men's minds in motion, and, especially, to give a direction to opinion upon subjects that already occupied the public. What if they could hope but little higher notoriety than that of being talked of while the topic was of immediate interest, or the number of the journal was still a novelty,—they yet thought it something to give an impulse to society which might last long after they were forgotten.

However we may explain the improved character of reviews and the disinterestedness of their contributors, there is no dispute that they are a part of our most popular, fashionable and instructive reading, and fill a large place in public and private libraries. Subjects of all sorts, of local and temporary, or general and permanent interest, the opinions of others upon them, the manner in which others have treated them, are placed within the reach of everybody; so that it will not do for any one who reads at all to neglect the journals, if he would be prepared to talk with all upon much that is occupying them. The owner of a perfect series of a good review has (I will not say a systematic, but) a most instructive and agreeable account of the period over which it extends, in almost every point of view. Even the inferior articles have their use, and the

signs of resolute partisanship are informing and admonitory.

I must not omit to say, as partially affecting the remarks upon the faint prospects of distant fame held out to reviewers, that selections of the most important of the old articles, for collective publication, are becoming common; and, moreover, individual contributors sometimes bring together their own articles in distinct works. This practice has its advantages; but it may be doubted whether readers of these collections, especially in another generation, will feel the exhilaration of a contemporary, who took up the just published number, with its various matter and minds, its veteran writers and eager recruits; when everybody was busy in detecting an old favorite, or inquiring after the name and pretensions of a new candidate and lauding or scolding at pleasure. The reviewer himself may have been powerfully affected by this pressure of public interest.

There is one evil at least to be apprehended from reviews, but one that is incidental to all criticism, and, we may add, to all instruction,—that they may impair self-dependence,—may tempt men to forego the benefit and pleasure of drawing from original sources and thinking for themselves. To speak only for their authority in literary questions;—I know

little respecting its extent at the present day; but the time has been when the decree of a favorite journal was held by many to be decisive, as a matter of course. The decree might have been decisive for the grounds on which it rested. It is no doubt possible to pronounce to-day, upon a book just published, an opinion which shall be substantially the same with that of all time to come. But there are obvious reasons for receiving the opinion at the time with caution. The general excitement which a new book may produce; the fact that all minds are warmed by it and warmed by each other while everybody is talking about it,\* may naturally lead one to think that then, if ever, the whole character of the work will be seen and felt. Still there is cause to fear exaggeration, whether the general impression be favorable or hostile, and that the retired critic will not escape the charm of voices that he hears on every side. Besides, he may have his private grudges or partialities; he and his author may be of the same or different parties; he may have perversely committed himself to the support of error and injustice. We may not then take any criticism as of course having authority, but merely as so much literary opinion that we ourselves

\* Quarterly Review, Volume 57, Article on Thomas Campbell.

are to weigh; while we hold the critic to be just as open to censure and amenable to opinion as if he were himself before the judge.



## A WRITER'S PREPARATION.

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No modest teacher would claim to have made his pupil a good writer; and no prudent one, even if he believed in his so great success, would undertake to say how it was effected. The young man himself could not explain the process by the most severe inquiry into the growth of his mind, and of the now fully developed power of execution.

So far as my own department of instruction is concerned, it would be easy to name the grammar and the rhetorical treatise that have been used, the dictionary that has been recommended, the authors that have been held up as masters of the language, and examples of style so far as any writer can be safely studied as a direct example. It would be easy to describe the courses of lectures that have been read to classes, and the method of conducting the critical exercises in composition. But how insufficient do all these appear to account for what we see a

man do when he passes from the rudiments at school to responsible writing in the real work of life. The halting but vigorous strugglers who had suffered mishaps here from the beginning, are now transformed. Those who were ready and graceful writers when they came, and whom the teacher regarded as needing little or no guidance from him, can confer upon him no deserved honor by their increased vigor and skill. The timid and careful move with more freedom now that they are left to themselves.

The change is not adequately explained by their entire change of habits on leaving college. A revolution has taken place in their minds, and, like others, not without a cause. It was not sudden, though it may seem so when it is first observed. It did not break out as a violent, separate event in their history. The preparation has been various, gradual and harmonious. The dull books and exercises of the rhetoric-class, we will believe, had their work to do among the other powers, and their effect has not perished, though they themselves, like the other instruments, are now forgotten.

The confidence of teachers that their apparatus has not been applied in vain may be pardoned them. It is not arrogant. They can say truly that part of their instruction was most definite, and, though humble, it generally accomplished what it proposed. Perhaps they hope

that more was taught than forms and proprieties, and that they led the mind to feel that there was some bond between the forms and proprieties and its own action. The process, after all, may have been more than mechanical.

The instructor, then, parts with many a young man in strong faith that he has done him good, but still perfectly willing to say that the preparation, for all that appears, is so unequal to any great effect, that he will not try to show a single point of its efficacy beyond the most humble of its offices. It is of no importance that he should. He is still encouraged to go on with the work. The instruction he gives is of ancient appointment, and most certainly relates to those accomplishments for which the mature writer is honored. The public think there is some connection between the means and the success, and wish the same discipline to be carried on with the next generation. Moreover, the skilful writer himself cares nothing for the secret of the process now that the end is obtained. And even if the entire series of influences that helped to make him what he is could be clearly stated in exact order, it might be of no use to a differently constituted mind.

Admitting then that the pupil does well to accept long-tried modes of education without question or misgiving, still some details of his experience admit of intelligible statement, and

are of interest to both the young and the mature writer, though possibly not of very direct use to either.

There is something worth our notice in the state of our minds when writing or when previously meditating upon our subject. If a man were asked whether he considered the mental action then going on as voluntary and submitted to his absolute regulation, he might at first reply that he did. He might say, 'I have always been accustomed to prepare myself for the work. I can recognize certain habits and methods which I generally follow and which I know that I formed for myself. If a man is not master in an occupation like this, what is meant by such expressions as the mind's deliberate discoveries, its creative power, its reliance upon its own efforts in the absence of foreign aids and motives?'

A friend may remind him that one at least of the philosophers thinks that there is more in his case than this.\* The mind's perpetual activity and flow of thought are not dependent upon his will. Let him try to thrust out the remembrance of some great calamity or good fortune, and it will yet rush over him like a flood. Let him lie down to rest and give over all care, having neither the wish nor the power to repel or invite meditation; and what rapid, countless fancies, arguments, schemes of conduct and

\* Tucker's 'Light of Nature Pursued.' Vol. I. Chap. 1.

grave observations will pour into the unguarded recesses of his soul, and pass away for the influx of others;—and all this shall be done as secretly and quietly as a good or evil spirit was supposed to breathe thoughts into the unresisting fancy of a dreamer. The author referred to, appealing to every one's experience, insists that a man, sitting down to study, 'produces none of the thoughts passing in his mind; not even that which he uses as the clew to bring in all the others.' He allows him, however, the power of directing, though he cannot cause or prevent their motion. As he is fond of illustration, he applies the following example to his purpose.

'We may compare our student to a man who has a river running through his grounds, which divides into a multitude of channels. If he dams up all the rest, the stream will flow in the one he leaves open. If he finds it breaking out into side branches, he can keep it within bounds by stopping up the outlets. If he perceives the course it takes ineffectual for his purpose, he can throw a mound across, and let it overflow at any gap he judges convenient. The water runs by its own strength without any impulse from the man, and, whatever he does to it, will find a vent somewhere or other. He may turn, alter or direct its motion, but neither gave nor can take it away. So it is with our thoughts.'

It remains for every writer to say whether this

representation is according to his experience. How much does he set down which he anticipated when he began to reflect upon a subject? After his work is done, how much does he find to be the result of previous design? He may begin with a prominent idea, which it is his purpose to lay open. Very soon unexpected relations spring up and gather round it, till sometimes the original subject becomes subordinate. A deeper and more comprehensive truth is discerned. His first scheme will be an embarrassment to him, if he has not set about his work with the feeling that it is never wise or safe, in entering upon a course of meditation, to say precisely whither it shall lead him. He thinks it will never do thus to commit himself as to the result. The incipient motions of thought, doubtful and prudent as they may well be, may soon acquire heroic energy, and his subject will dilate with his capacity and warmth. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth. Two or three characters only, with as many scenes and incidents, have swelled to a grand drama or novel, and he feels almost like a stranger in the midst of his own works. This is far from being a sign of an ill-disciplined mind, or of one ignorant of its strength and resources, and borne into mere extravagances by a weak surrender of itself to a passing influence. It is the natural experience of some men in the healthiest mental

condition. In others, constitutionally more cool, or habitually more guarded, the course of ideas will be slower and less unexpected, but not essentially unlike.

Nothing that has just been said or quoted throws any doubt upon our having a great deal to do for ourselves as thinkers and writers. We may be very ignorant with regard to the production of thoughts. The poet who invokes a muse to inspire him may act as rationally as he who sits down to make a book with the declaration that he will work it all out of his own head, with a consciousness of every step, with a foresight of all that is to come, and with a resolution not to put down a single thought which he does not owe to a voluntary exercise of reflection. But of this we are certain, that we are purposely, not less than unconsciously, to supply materials and multiply occasions for thinking; and that it depends upon ourselves, upon the habits we form and the discipline we exercise, whether we are employed to good purpose or not. A very general subject is here opened to us, in which both the moral and intellectual character are concerned; and in most of its bearings the writer is not more interested than other persons. Our business, however, is with the writer alone, and we shall now suppose him to be agitating the question,—‘What good use can I make of reading as a part of my preparation?’



At school and college I suppose books are looked upon, partly, as requiring of him a certain amount of hard work, for some mysterious good that they are to yield by and by. As connected with his exercises in composition, they are consulted upon particular subjects for facts, thoughts and illustrations to be applied directly to a present task; and probably some favorite author is remembered for fascinating peculiarities of style which, with the natural love of imitation in early life, the student is pleased to exhibit on his own page. There is no cause for wonder that such a use is made of resources so near at hand, by one who is now for the first time called on to perform exercises so grave and so alarming to his self-diffidence. The research, moreover, may be useful beyond its serving a present emergency. The bad effects of the practice it is not easy to prevent, because it is not easy so to define and press them that they will be felt or even apprehended by the young. The indirect benefit of reading and by far the highest,—I mean its exercising the mind, forming the judgment and taste, and breathing a spirit, far better than that of emulation, the spirit of independence and self-reliance,—this indirect effect of good books, though never wholly lost upon the young, is yet scarcely valued as it should be till we reach a time of life, when we are disposed to examine a little both the influences which have shaped our

minds, and those which, unhappily, failed to make a decided impression.

Many are the complaints which are brought against books. If they were confined to our ill selection, or to hurtful habits of reading, they might, though very seasonable, attract little notice. But books are said to make us indolent and self-indulgent; to create a love of plodding accumulation or a morbid taste for bibliographical curiosities; a vain self-complacency in the amount of our reading, such as is never produced by other modes of acquisition; and a general disposition to stop at what we read, to acquiesce in opinions, and take pride in calling men masters. I cannot undertake to refute in detail what I think to be wrong in these accusations, or to state with proper qualifications what is unquestionably true in them, and wisely intended for counsel and warning. A brief notice of the last complaint is all that I propose to myself, and merely for the purpose of considering the supposed unfavorable influence of reading on originality. I put out of view all who can properly be called plagiarists, and have little more respect for those who reject, as far as they may, all foreign aid.

The only question is, do books make us less independent, less ourselves, than any other source of knowledge or exhilaration? Some contend that this is the ordinary effect of high cultivation

and abundant reading; that there will always be less of character in literature where colleges, libraries, teachers and learned associations abound; and they see the want increasing with the multiplication and lower prices of books. If we doubt this influence and support ourselves by citing eminent examples to the contrary, they treat those as exceptions or explain away their authority, and still maintain that the fewer direct helps you give the writer, the better. At first thought, originality would seem to be too strong a quality to be hurtfully affected by circumstances of any kind. Let us try to see what it is, that we may better understand its perils.

The word *original*, is commonly used to denote the character of a mind which, from its constitution and natural action,—not from weak and random eccentricity, but from sound, inherent activity,—takes its own view of things and makes its own use of them. Originality supposes that we draw from original sources; but not in the same sense that the voyager or naturalist draws absolutely new facts from exploring oceans or the kingdoms of nature. It is not of the least moment whether a subject be just brought to the notice of men, or be the oldest and commonest; nor yet from what quarter or in what way it comes; for, if an original mind acts at all, it must act up to its character; it must reflect itself upon whatever it stu-

dies.\* So that we are justified in saying that what it draws from its subject owes, in one sense, its existence to this mind, and bears its stamp.

It belongs to its nature to spread itself over everything that comes in its way, if there be any possibility of sympathy; not, however, for the purpose of saying something new and strange, but because it loves and seeks exercise. Hence it is always likely to be well filled; not simply that it has ample collections, but because of its power to give new forms to things and convert them to its special use. It is rich, not by hoarding borrowed treasures but by turning everything into gold. So cheerful, healthy and active does this quality seem to be, that we are almost constrained to think that it must manifest itself most strongly and generously when it is exposed to a variety of objects and interests.

Some, however, believe that isolation is peculiarly favorable to originality. No doubt a hermit may be original in the absence both of men and of books; but not because of his solitude or his privations. His condition would look very unpromising to most men. Imagine him forever by himself, musing upon himself,

\* 'Originality never works more fruitfully than in a soil rich and deep with the foliage of ages.' — *Westminster Review*, January, 1854.

revolving a few favorite opinions, and buried in speculations all of one character. This, certainly, is the most perfect seclusion. But his habits seem more likely to produce harsh and narrow peculiarity than expansive and animated individuality. He will probably soon have much of the oddness, of the constant reference to self and repetition of self which we commonly observe in solitary men. He may learn to exaggerate trifles because they are his, and remain stationary in the contemplation of his darling conceits. There is good reason to think that the mind may be made as feeble in its whole character by turning perpetually upon itself and refusing help or impulse from abroad, as by immersing itself in books and resting in the thoughts and reports of other men. There are madmen and sluggards in cells as well as in libraries. So that, on the whole, it does not belong to us to say that a man's condition, tastes, pursuits, his great learning or his meagre learning, have anything to do with the manifestation of original qualities. This seems to lie wholly with himself.

A book then may be as strictly an original source as anything else. As giving us information only, it is sometimes as new and animating as the ocean to an inland man. Besides, what nobler or more original study can we have than that of a man in his writings, — a contemplative

being,—and often more fully disclosed to us there, than he could be in a life of action; and brought near to us for our minute inspection and full sympathy.

But there is a vague notion that a book differs from all other literary sources in one important point, so far as the present question is concerned; and the distinction is, that what we read has already been revolved by a human mind. The germ or element of thought, once common property, is no longer in its simple state. It is appropriated by being modified, colored, combined with other substances and capable of peculiar application after being subjected to this hidden transmutation. A charm is now thrown round it, a consecration that must not be violated. A seal, not to be mistaken, is set upon it, and you cannot use the thought unless by taking it avowedly just as you find it. And the same, of course, would be as true of what we hear as of what we read.

This theory of property and inviolability is pleasing and not without foundation. But what a strange idea must the objector have of the use we may lawfully make of another man's thoughts. We may never have occasion to borrow them; but is this the only or even the best service to which we can honestly put them? Do we wrong the owner because we

are warmed into admiration, strengthened, purified, made happy by his words, and better prepared for our peculiar work? 'Does he suffer loss because our lamp is lighted at his?'

But there are more direct and equally honorable modes of using what others have written. We frequently hear it said, in no malicious sense, that a man makes what he reads his own. It did not pass into his memory to remain there in its original shape, like an historical date or the buried talent. It exercised his mind and received a character from it. He does not seek for it in his memory as a laid-up treasure; it is not copied as a brilliant passage from his common-place book; but it springs up in connection with his own thoughts, and becomes so intimately a part of them that he does not suspect that he is indebted for it to another. The first proprietor, should he recognize it, would have no other feeling than of delight to see his property in such good hands and turned to so good account. This, to be sure, is not the highest use we can make of another man's mind, but it will serve to answer a somewhat over-refined objection.

That a student is exposed to perils from his constant association with great writers is not disputed. I refer not to the grossest of these



perils,—such as the temptation to take the thoughts or copy the style of another,—nor yet to the subtle enchantment which draws one unconsciously into imitation of his special favorite or of the popular idol of the day. There is danger from terror as well as from love. A man may be discouraged by contemplating excellence. His sense of this excellence is of itself proof of no small capacity and resource on his own part, and, if left to its natural and free action, would swell into generous, sustaining admiration and reverence. But it may also create self-distrust; and this may degenerate, if not into envy, yet, into despair or peevish uneasiness at the idea that he cannot reach another's elevation. Why, rather, does there not spring up the glowing thought,—I, too, have a height before me, which none other may reach? Of course it cannot be his ambition to do precisely what another has done. He would be content to do as well in a different direction. But who is to pass upon the question of comparative merit? There is no common measure of excellence any more than of minds. And, in this indefinite state of the case, (the best possible for us all,) each must do his own work according to his power and natural tendencies.

Goethe told Eckermann that if he had been an Englishman he should have been over-

powered by Shakspeare.\* He must have tried to avoid him and choose a new course for himself. A monstrous delusion, probably, even in his own case, and certainly one which does not appear to have led Shakspeare's countrymen astray. To shun greatness in another, for whatever cause, is as spiritless as servile waiting upon it. The mere instituting of comparisons between ourselves and others is a proof, or, at any rate, the beginning of weakness. It not only blinds us to our own secret forces, but prevents our seeing anything truly. We gradually lose the power of discerning what is good and beautiful in the very writers who have gained this fatal possession of our admiration. They disown us, and we perceive it not. At last, we are led to believe that readers will adopt our rule of estimation, and judge us, not for ourselves, but according as we stand in relation to men of established name.

To one who is thus perplexed and dispirited, the simple truth is the best direction: You will never be judged by competent readers with any such reference, or with any reference that does not concern yourself alone. You will not be condemned for being as bad as another, or worse,—or praised for being

\* If I remember right, he was speaking of the advantage there is in nations' having different languages.

as good as another, or better. All will depend upon the never-deceiving evidence that what you do is your own, — that it proceeds from your own resources or your own barrenness.

## HABITS OF READING.

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HAVING had occasion to speak of reading, in connection with a writer's preparation for his work, I return to the subject that I may state one or two things, of a practical bearing, which I could not then conveniently introduce. They relate mainly to reading superficially ; — not to the reading of superficial books, but to a habit of light, indolent, heedless inspection of any work.

One symptom, — perhaps it may be called one cause of this, — is the ambition to know a great deal *about* books ; to be familiar with catalogues, names, titles, prices, publishers, an author's corrected proofs, editions and their relative estimation, curious alterations in successive impressions, and the like. Such knowledge is far from being, in all cases, not worth the getting, for it often assists the biographer of literary men and the historian of literary eras. Certainly, I mean no reproach to regular biblio-

maniacs, — men often of great learning and useful enthusiasm, — a little odd in their humor, it may be, but very serious in their business, and well able to bear the gibes and merriment of the unsympathizing. I speak only of pretenders, who love to waste time in the mere turning over of books to gratify a vain and morbid curiosity, and acquire a poor notoriety. Think of using a large public library as a place to lounge in ; to form a taste for slight, desultory reading ; to gather up literary news to be retailed in conversation, in a spirit no higher than that of gossip. If this practice were fallen into by young men for amusement only, or for a brief triumph of vanity, and ended there ; if it were not almost sure to make them frivolous readers and flippant critics, I should not be disposed to treat it seriously. There is no objection to a student's being something of a bibliographer ; but he should be guarded against the literary foppery which has nearly supplanted the massy and far more respectable pedantry of our fathers.

You must not suppose that I equally object to reading superficially with regard to all books and all persons. Dr. Johnson, certainly, was able to amass information from volumes that he hurried over impatiently and with large omissions, and many books may be turned to good account, which require and deserve no

more thorough examination. I make a distinction, too, between the case of a student who is preparing at the university or elsewhere for commencing, by and by, his professional course, and that of a man who has already entered upon that course. The latter has a prominent object, of a very grave character and quite unconnected with literary delights, to occupy, excite and govern his mind; so that it may be safe for him to employ part of his leisure in running over the catalogues and shelves of a large miscellaneous collection, just to learn what books there are in the world and where they may be found. It may be safe for him to be even a smatterer, aside from his regular studies. His thorough training in his professional investigations, and his formed intellectual habits will teach him how to use profitably a great amount of various matter, which he may have acquired almost accidentally, — almost snatched from any quarter in his play-time. He will wear gracefully what he has thus lightly collected.

But, on the other hand, in the course of early education, this very literature, followed as it may be into several languages, is to be the student's *business*. It is, for the present, his profession. It is his work, not his play; the stuff, and not the ornament. If it were my purpose to state all that he is to aim at and

do here, in what are called the strictly literary branches, or in the English branch alone, I should have a ready and sufficient argument for you that trifling will not do in this part of your course,—that there is room and demand for hard work and profound study. Besides, the sole object is not to make one a man of learning and exact taste, but also to form in him that most difficult to form of all habits, the habit of attention. Then will follow, as we hope, a sharpened power of discrimination. And, as the fruit of all, he has learned how to find pleasure enough in a useful labor, however irksome, to bear it well, and to get from it all the good it can yield. Such a student is likely to be thoroughly disciplined for intellectual work at least; and no doubt he has acquired much, both in knowledge and in habits, which will serve him well in the work of active life. But the moment he loses sight of duties and advantages, and begins to trifle miscellaneously with books, and crave variety, and talk of general knowledge and of keeping pace with the age, there is reason to fear that he is losing all control of himself, and all perception of the useful in reading.

Even an orderly and diligent reader may be warned not to forget the distinction between a well-informed and a much-reading man, and that with great possessions it is very possible



to be superficial. I will explain my meaning by a single instance. Let me suppose that one of you desires to become familiar with early English poetry. He has been strongly tempted by hearing it much spoken of, and by the facilities offered in glossaries, notes, a corrected text, pictorial illustrations, and a fair type. In fact, he lives in the days of the revival of our old masters. Once, most of us had to rely upon modernized extracts, or perhaps worse, upon modern versions of our antiquated poetry;—but now it may be said to be generally accessible and inviting in its own shape.

Still, with all our advantages, I cannot suppose that many will undertake to read the entire collection of old English poetry, and I hope few would be satisfied with selections. For the guidance and encouragement of the student, I will try to show him how he may make a comparatively small amount most useful and satisfying. I assure him, then, (however paradoxical it may seem,) that if he reads frequently, thoroughly, fondly, a single great poet of the early period, he will know not only more of him, but of the age in which he lived, the condition of our language and versification at that time, the sources and character of our early literature, the influences it transmitted, and, from all these, the changes we have passed through for better or worse, than from all that

critics have said on these subjects, and from all the specimens or versions that have been given of writers at or near the time. Of course, I do not mean to limit his studies to one poet, but to apprise him that he may safely forfeit a great amount of desultory information concerning our old poets, if he will make himself the intimate companion of one or more of the most eminent, who are filled with their age and represent it. Indeed, with their help, he will find it easy to master their less-known contemporaries, if his curiosity should take that direction. In any view of the case, he will be saved from desperate efforts to master the whole by giving every writer some degree of attention, and a thorough study to none.

I might say all this for the student's encouragement merely, as he stands, alarmed perhaps, in the presence of large and obscure portions of our literature. I might say it for what I believe will be its permanent good effect on his mind, his habits as a scholar, and his enjoyment. But I recommend this method, first of all, that he may make himself a thoroughly informed man in writings too little sought after, that his knowledge of them may be both comprehensive and substantial.

## A WRITER'S HABITS.

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ONE thing which the writer has to do for himself, and in which all depends upon himself, is to acquire such self-command that he can give his whole attention to a subject, so that he shall be in a way to comprehend it perfectly and be able to put down his thoughts freshly as they occur, without losing a step in the longest train. This self-control must be a principle and a habit, that shall be equal to any temptation or opposition, and stand faithfully by him when writing is the most irksome thing in the world, when the body is exhausted and the mind listless and vacant. It will never do to put off such work as his till it invites him. It is a miserable mistake that success in original composition is hopeless unless he sets about it with all his heart, and that, when the spirit is reluctant, he may at least insist upon having a subject which is full of promise and invitation.

Sometimes the idle and conceited fall into

this strain, that they may be thought men of genius because they can practise the follies of the great. Sometimes men of a visionary, sensitive cast adopt it, and think it would be a kind of sacrilege to force the mind into action, and to expect from effort and violence what can come only from unpremeditated movements or resistless inspiration. These are the unproductive literary dreamers, who seem to think that rare gifts set them above conscience and rules, and that the delicate structure of their minds requires them to keep aloof from the rude encounters and intimacies of daily life. Their activity must be within.

Such persons are above and beyond teaching. But to the plainer sort it may be said that if we regard writing as a duty, though it be a mere literary exercise here at college, it will do more for us than make us skilful in composition. It will prepare us in a degree for active life, by giving us habits of self-denial, industry and close study, a general and ready command of our faculties, a clear, direct way of thinking on all subjects and occasions, a promptness and decision in our opinions, and a natural and precise method of expressing them. A man who writes much and with consideration is doing himself an incalculable good in respect to every other study. Thus what to one seems absolute drudgery and to another an amusement or re-

finement, may be made a means of forming good intellectual habits generally, and a generous preparation for the varied calls of life.

To return to the difficulties we shall have to encounter in our frequent indolence and irresolution: I believe there are few who do not feel at times an almost invincible disinclination to writing. There is something to repel in the necessary preparation. They have much that is merely mechanical to attend to. They must shut themselves from society. The eye must not look abroad. All the senses must, as far as possible, be brought to repose. One tiresome position must be kept. And then, instead of the effortless occupation of reading or conversation, where the mind is in perpetual activity from a foreign impulse, — instead of free musing or speculation by ourselves, just as the thoughts choose to roam, — our meditations must often be brought down to a few points by main force and kept there till they answer our purpose, or else lead to something far better than our purpose. And when new thoughts begin to pour upon us rapidly, we must govern them so that the pen may keep pace with them, and thousands in the meanwhile may flit from us forever, which we fondly think were of more worth than any we have saved.

When you connect these difficulties with men's natural indolence, you may wonder at

the stores of voluntary literature which enrich our libraries. But self-imposed duty soon becomes a pleasure; employment becomes a pleasure. The mind that required to be goaded before it would act at all, and to be curbed before it would act in the direction we desired, soon begins to feel and rejoice in its strength, and to move onward with an impulse of its own,—as cheerful in its labors as it ever was in its dreams,—with a deep and full current of thought rushing through it, and beautiful fancies swarming into it uncalled, and all conspiring to accomplish what has now become our all-absorbing purpose. Frequent repetitions of such a trial give some men a wonderful confidence in their powers and resources; so that let the subject look ever so unpromising at first, let their faculties be ever so languid and reluctant, they begin their work with little distrust of the event, and enter the dark void before them assured that it will soon be illuminated and filled.

I am aware that there is a difference in men as to the facility with which they bring themselves to this task. Some of quite ordinary endowments, who are incapable of thinking profoundly and comprehensively, whose temperament is cheerful and their ambition easily appeased, will know nothing like difficulty or inequality in their efforts. Their thoughts are

always on the surface and near at hand, and rarely change their hue, or increase considerably in number or dimensions, during many years. And always having a ready command of such words and phrases as are in harmony with the ideas, they will sit down at any moment to any subject and manage it in their way with the utmost fluency and self-content.

Others, too, with intellects of the highest order, will enjoy an almost incessant activity and buoyancy of mind, and delight in labor at all times, and devote themselves to subjects the most dissimilar, one after another, with a promptness and facility that seem nearly miraculous.

But I speak to those only who feel and are willing to acknowledge a positive difficulty and embarrassment when they undertake to write; not from any consciousness of mental debility, but from reluctance to begin. To such I have but one more observation to make. When a determined, persevering effort shall have once brought them to consider a subject fairly, when they have taken a firm hold of it and are warmed by their exertion, they should not let it go for a moment till their work is accomplished. If nature is not exhausted by overstraining, let them take full advantage of their present interest in the train of thought they have fallen into. The first heat is the most



intense and productive; the first fresh impression will be the liveliest if preserved at the moment. If we put by our work and say: 'Now we are masters of this subject; we see our whole course; we will remit our labors and begin, some other day, where we left off and finish at our leisure;'—we shall certainly deceive ourselves. We may indeed carry our plan and our principal points in our memory; but we cannot so easily preserve, amidst other scenes and cares and pleasures, the state of mind in which we formed this plan and settled these leading points. The crude materials are indeed all left for us to work upon, but the fire which had prepared them for our hands is gone out, and every trial to kindle it anew may be in vain.

Let it be considered farther that the most rapid writer is he who has the habit of putting down at once what occurs to him in seasons of great warmth and exuberance. And there is reason to expect that he will in general be the truest and exactest writer, with all his impetuosity; for he will state what he conceives strongly, at a time when he feels concerned to do it justice; and he will naturally so select and arrange his words as to express precisely what he thinks and in the way that he thinks. Hence he will be the most impressive writer. He will have those marks of sincerity which

are as well-known and attractive to grown people as to children.

I by no means object to the utmost strictness of criticism when we come to look over our work ; but one of the worst habits a writer can fall into is that of stopping to rectify his style at the moment of composing,—interrupting the course of his reflections to pass judgment upon their appearance, and looking back over the ground he has just travelled to see that nothing is out of the way. He inevitably sacrifices the grace and freedom of manner which flow from a natural state of the feelings, which are precisely adapted to the spontaneous current of the thoughts, and which do much towards making others enter into them heartily ; and all that he gains by the sacrifice is an almost painful freedom from faults, and what has been aptly termed a conscious manner, which is an offence to everybody. The work of correction should not begin till all other work is done. Its office is not to check the mind when in full action, but to remove errors and supply deficiencies which its very ardor and rapidity may have caused.

It would be needless, even if it were possible, to enumerate the different habits of writers, growing out of accident, or affectation, or of a fair trial of what discipline is most suitable for the individual. Every man is apt to think that there is something peculiar in his own case

which justifies and requires something peculiar in his ways; and in consulting his temper and taste, he often does little more than make himself singular in trifles, and self-indulgent when he ought to be manly and laborious. Because the mind's work may be more exhausting than any other, he claims to be allowed the choice of his hours. One prefers the broad day; another is inspired only in the later watches of the night. In reading literary biography, we find frequent instances of singularity in regard to the seasons of study and relaxation, to residence, walks, associates and meals; as if such things were of moment to successful exertion; and as if the slightest deviation from a favorite practice would disturb the mind's action as seriously as would a mote the springs and movements of a time-piece.

But, however it may be with these, it is certain that some of the writer's habits are of importance, as they are intimately connected with the mind, whether for good or evil, and require pains whether to form or undo them. I will refer to one only, which respects the difference in writers as to their preparation. Some prefer to do the principal part of their meditation beforehand; and where the mind is cool and uninventive this is practicable to a considerable extent. Their plan is sketched in every particular; the materials are collected, hewn, shaped and fitted,

till it seems as if nothing remained but for the building to go up. They are fond of patient, connected thinking ; and such is the good order of their minds, and their memories are so much aided by the strict connection of their thoughts when first revolved, that they are able afterwards to give us a fair copy of them in writing. Though this habit is not peculiar to men of slow, laborious minds, yet it is particularly important to them, as they soon learn by experience. If they should begin to write at a sudden call, upon an unconsidered subject, the enterprise would probably be as fruitless as an attempt at extemporaneous speaking by one of confused thoughts and embarrassed utterance, who had always relied upon his memory or his notes. If they should trust to immediate suggestions, probably none would occur but the very commonest, and these but slightly connected, so dependent are such writers for good and pertinent matter upon their taking a deliberate and minute view of their subject.

Others, on the contrary, will tell us that they cannot think without a pen in their hands. It serves as a charm to collect the scattered powers and give them a definite direction. When one thought is safely put upon paper, it draws a multitude round it. Something like instinct enables writers of this class to feel their way through mazes and over obstacles, much more

surely and effectually than they could have laid out or cut one. We do not suppose, however, that their preparation is small because it is scarcely discernible either by us or by themselves. They are always acquiring something, it may be unconsciously, which they will turn to account in proper time; and a certain quickness of perception and sagacity, an alacrity of memory, and a power of rapid and almost infinitely various combination, will secure them against the want of serviceable materials, at any moment they may be called for.

## THE STUDY OF OUR OWN LANGUAGE.

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DIRECTIONS for a good use of language have, as they should, a prominent place in the syntax of our grammars and in our rhetorical text-books; and they are not lost sight of in the familiar exercises we have together in English composition. Some rather general views suggested by the subject may be usefully presented in a lecture, and may impress upon you the value of the minute instruction which is more properly given elsewhere.

The proposition I wish to consider now is that our own language requires our study. We have more to learn of it than we ordinarily gather up, with little apparent thought or labor, in passing from infancy to maturity. Its acquisition and use seem to the native as natural as to breathe or move. He acknowledges that he must study a foreign tongue, even if he lives among the people to acquire it as children do. But he is born to his own. It presses itself upon him

every moment. He cannot escape it. And if he has been generally well brought up at home, and accustomed to good society, and has read the best books in the language, how should he fail to be perfect in it? There may yet remain something to be studied.

With the mere grammar of the tongue I am not at present concerned. But it may be observed that this is commonly learned in the same unconscious way that we get the sound and meaning of words. We are not aware of labor or attention, or of the need of either. An accomplished Latin scholar from our higher seminaries will sometimes tell me that he had never studied it at school, and that he knows it, so far at least as rules and technical terms are involved, only by what he has found in his classical guides. Probably he is not the less accurate in his English for having thoroughly learned the structure of another tongue; but whatever accuracy he has, he owes to his familiarity with English books and with good society. He has no principles, that he is aware of, to go by. He has no systematic knowledge of our speech. He has no list of exceptions and irregularities duly classified and committed to memory. If a doubt is raised by his teacher, he is more likely to think that his teacher has forgotten his Latin, than that he is pressing a lawful English idiom. Probably it will not be till he is persuaded in many ways



that his own tongue has its peculiar difficulties and niceties, that he begins to look into authorities and usage in order to make himself a fair English scholar.

Our language, however troublesome to foreigners, appears to us a very simple and bald formation by the side of the well-ordered and variously inflected tongues of our ancient masters. It seems to invite us to take liberties by its unimposing air. It has done so little for itself that we will do with it what we please. So thought our fathers, if we may judge from their many loose practices; and so think, in our times, not merely adventurous young students, but mature writers of high name, who seem to be doing their utmost to show as little reverence for the old rules of grammar as for the old canons of verbal purity. But we take heart when we see that the counsels and remonstrances of critics and philologists at least keep pace with the laxity of writers. We should be still more encouraged if the profound investigations into our language, which now attract much attention, were included among the studies of advanced classes at college.

But we are to consider difficulties of a different kind. At present, I would direct your attention chiefly to the difficulty that arises from what is called the uncertainty of language. If the words in popular use were significant, in all

cases, of some precise idea (neither more nor less) as arithmetical characters are of a definite quantity; if, in both cases, a single sign only were used to express the idea or quantity; or, if all our terms, like those of the professions, trades and arts, were technical, including nothing under them, in any circumstances, but certain particulars which the parties concerned had defined and agreed upon with a view to their own convenience;—then our popular vocabulary might be as perfectly, if not as easily, learned, as a list of towns or minerals. All men in their senses might obtain an equally extensive and correct use of it; and no one would blunder or be at a loss but from failure of memory.

But the growth of common language is different from the establishment of technical terms and proper names. It is gradual and irregular; and when the state of a language at various periods is observed, one is disposed to think that it has been greatly at the mercy of caprice or accident. Certainly a number of learned men did not assemble to institute the symbols we now use, and to fix their import by careful definitions or descriptions. The public, the multitude, the unlettered population of an age beyond memory, beyond history, constitute the first great academy that ordains the signs of speech and gives them significance and currency. By and by the increasing wants of men call for an increased vo-

cabulary. New words are introduced; old words are turned a little from their first meaning by dropping or adding something; and it should seem that in many of these changes less regard was paid to analogy than the student of long-subsequent ages would desire.\*

In due time a written literature succeeds to the recitations of bards, or other formal methods of public oral addresses; and popular authors begin to revolutionize and systematize the old barbarous speech. Very different tastes and resources are brought to this work. Some powerful writer becomes an authority for words borrowed from another nation, but shaped to suit the genius of his own language. Some, dissatisfied with seeing how old words have departed from their original signification, propose others to express it more definitely; and then in their turn undergoing similar or as great alterations, we are supplied amply with synonymes. Once more, a word in the course of time will have a somewhat peculiar meaning according to its connection with others; so that looking at every definition which the best dictionaries may give of it will be to little purpose, unless examples are quoted to show us how it is used, how associated, when it is intended to express such or such an

\* It is proper to say that we are speaking of a language which has grown up at home, without violent additions from the tongues of conquering invaders.

idea. These are but few of the particulars which might be enumerated to illustrate the irregularity and caprice which are charged upon the growth of language.

At last the language of a country is said to be fixed, to be settled; but this is to be understood merely in comparison with its chaotic state at an early period. For though language is not quite so mutable as running water, yet we know enough of its progress and retrogressions never to expect it to be stationary, while there remains any considerable amount of literary zeal, activity and freedom, or while we are constantly exposed to literary epidemics of languor and vicious taste. We think it a great good-fortune if novelties, that seem to be inevitable, are but introduced with a due respect to analogy. Still we say, at some epoch rather than at any other, that the language is settled. Some high Augustan age has come. So many celebrated works, now deemed classical, have been published, that a mark is considered as set upon all good and all bad words, and the only legitimate use of terms is considered as decreed. Instead of the perplexities and fluctuations of a merely spoken language, we have books of authority, standard dictionaries, standard grammars; and he will be regarded as little less than a barbarian or a willing martyr, who shall venture to add to the collections of an approved lexicographer, or in

any way to dispute his authority. Nevertheless, the law of change is itself immutable; and though, at an advanced stage of literature, it operates with less violence and disorder than it once did, yet that it is ever in operation we cannot doubt. Here then we see a part of the difficulty we must encounter in the attempt to master our own mother tongue.

It is further necessary to make our language a study, because many words which we employ with the utmost confidence and freedom, have a delicate meaning and beauty which require consideration that they may be fully apprehended and applied with all their natural fitness. These words serve various purposes. Some, for example, are called descriptive or picturesque, and are designed to make us better acquainted with the poetical and spiritual significance of outward things. They do not profess to give us anything absolutely new and foreign to us,—anything of which we have not the germ and capacity within ourselves. When their purport is known, we are ready with a response, more or less perfect, of recognition and sympathy. The light they throw must depend partly upon their own suitableness, and partly upon our sensibility. Though it should appear faint at first, yet, if it be pure, we may make it stronger, extend it farther, and not only fill out what is directly suggested, but try to discover its connection with other things.

The words themselves may be already in constant use for quite common purposes, but, in their new and unexpected relation, they have this dignified office and suggestive power.

But how do we learn the great secret wrapped up in them? We see that a foreigner generally fails to acquire a perfect, native sense of their import. He has not lived from infancy in the quiet reception and unconscious study of them, and felt how one word is allied to others, and how one age, — with its writings, its unrecorded traditions and its common style of conversation, — flows into another. Mere labor and skill might almost as well be applied to create a new sense as to infuse into him a home-born perception of their whole significance. Hence we may suppose that it is enough to be natives in order to feel the full inspiration of our own language; that we receive it as we receive our familiar prospects, or delightful sounds, or the customs and opinions of our common country. And it must be admitted that much of its deeper meaning seems to be drawn in instinctively. We cannot name the day or the occasion when a throng of happy associations, emotions, I had almost said sensations, began to cluster round a certain word; while, perhaps, we well remember others, which had a glory about them, in some particular passage, that at once filled us with light and animation, but which a life's study of



definitions would never have disclosed to us. We may concede all this to the power of intuition or instant revelation, without making an artistic observation of our language less necessary. For the object is to carry out a work already begun, by perfecting what we have acquired, and by discovering, it may be, new virtues and uses in words which we have learned to prize for their unexpected capabilities. Besides, we are put upon the inquiry whether we, too, may not make original applications of well-known terms, which shall be in strict accordance with the genius of our language, and thus add to its wealth without enlarging its vocabulary. These things will require more study than might at first be expected in a case where discoveries often appear to be spontaneous, and are, no doubt, frequently unpremeditated. We call, then, not only the imaginative and susceptible, but the vigilant and comparing, to the examination of this class of words, that their power of moving and expressing the mind may be better understood and increased.

If there be difficulty and need of study in a case like this, what may we not expect when we come to the great mass of general terms,—the conventional signs of abstract and most complex ideas,—the analysis of which is a trial for the keenest intellects. If they were consecrated to the service of careful philosophers, there might



be hope that they would be applied intelligently and convey something definite. But they are freely used and as freely received by the ill-informed and unreflecting, with perfect assurance that their vague and dreamy apprehension of them is knowledge; and no doubt, even among such persons, they make, on the whole, a pretty correct though not a very distinct impression. But let a sturdy, popular phrase or a flashing metaphor suddenly drop among these hazy generalities, and how quickly the clouds scatter. The listless common people begin to see and feel to some purpose. Still, as we cannot do without general terms, even when we address the multitude, the student is to define them as well as he may to his own mind, so that he may employ them with all the exactness and vigor they will admit. The difference in men is wonderful in this respect; and it arises partly, we allow, from greater sagacity and natural strength and quickness of apprehension in some, though far more from careful and habitual observation of their language, and from a religious abhorrence of the practice of casting forth words at random, in full faith that, in their grand dimness, they will pass for oracles.

It seems then that to be faithful to ourselves and to our language, we must, in the use of it,

have other helps than those which belong to us all as mere natives. I shall speak of one only, which, though of a very general character, admits of many practical applications. And this is,—the help to be derived from habitual and hearty familiarity with those writers who, however distant from each other in time, or however various in style and genius, are yet honored generally for their masterly use of English. This is the true way to establish a thoroughly native and a thoroughly scholar-like knowledge and employment of the language. It brings all other aids to the proof, and perfects those that are of value.

The advantage which I have particularly in mind, is the liberal view which such a familiarity opens to us of our great common possession. We learn that our language has a long history of its formation and resources, with one spirit running through it from the beginning, to give perpetual proof of national identity, and to make perpetual acknowledgment of our debt to the first rude formers, who, though rarely cited now as authorities, still survive in the character which they early stamped on our speech. Thus, without acquiring a particle of what can properly be called antique in our diction, we are sure to possess ourselves of all that is alive in the language from the moment that it had anything like a literary being. We

understand its whole theory and practice. A student, who feels himself to be one of such a venerable brotherhood, is like a good subject who lives under an old, slowly formed constitution of government. He loves to boast of his lineage and his ancient liberties. He has a history to take pride in. He is careful to make all needed alterations in the spirit of the old institutions. He frowns upon the presumptuous innovator, who, ignorant of their character and object, is ready to sacrifice both by additions and changes the most hostile.

Such a generous sense of relationship with all the past in our literature is the true spirit to carry into all that follows. See from what bad ways it may save us :— First, from all servile hunting for authority in an individual favorite or in a particular school, as if it were in the power of any one man or of any set of men to exemplify all the compass of a language. Better still, it saves us from a narrow interpretation of the rule that we must studiously conform to the standard of our own time. The rule is good. The abuse of it is in making fashion, whim, prejudice, our standard. The authority of mere fashion is, I admit, extensive and imposing ; but it may not last half a generation ; and all the time it is trifling with the language and with us. The greatest writers may unconsciously be harmed by it ; but they

will never conform knowingly to its shallow and ephemeral exactions. They will rather consent to be unpopular, to be pitied, derided, it may be envied, for their independence, than voluntarily separate themselves from the immortals who write for all ages, who choose what is best in the language as they find it and help to make it durable.

But caution follows closely upon indulgence; and, at the risk of seeming to take back something that has just been said, I recommend to young writers not to think too much of their liberties. Our literary freedom may cost us a struggle; and so may the power to use and enjoy it well. It is not a very easy thing to learn how far we may lawfully go, nor very agreeable to respect the bounds which we know we ought not to pass.

No one, I suppose, will contend that the language is beyond improvement; but the presumption should be in its favor as it stands, and reasons should be required for changes. For example, new facts must have suitable names or terms of description; but at least let us be certain that the facts brought to our notice are new; for men are not only fond of being discoverers, but also of thinking that an idea is more decidedly, unquestionably new, if it be newly apparelled. If, however, we have proper cases to provide for, let us study to make

the addition look as much like good, home-born, trustworthy English as we can.

Then we are to guard against the undue influence of contemporary tastes and habits of speech. But the dread of our peril may drive us into eccentricity, conceit, and unreasonable attachment to our own ways. A degree of unconscious mannerism often throws a pleasant and instructive light upon a man's habits, his education, and even his cast of mind. So, every mark of genuine originality is to be prized. But very honest and very eminent writers are liable to literary infirmities, and are sometimes willing to be noted for peculiarities in the merest trifles. Some favorite word, which pleased them partly for being uncommon, and which perhaps had excellent effect while it continued to be so, appears too frequently and is spoiled by overfondling. Readers even begin to suspect poverty from the repetition. It certainly shows narrow partiality.

On the other hand, our license is not to be surrendered, but well used. Men of the best taste may often find it expedient to abandon much of the phraseology of their time, merely because it has become hackneyed. Sometimes the choicest words, which appear almost consecrated to the higher departments of literature, become a popular or fashionable cant; and hence the thorough English scholar may think

he should do them wrong by using them in a degenerate age. If he adopts in their place some simple terms, which people generally do not use for such a purpose, he is unreasonably charged with oddness, with a love of strange things, and with proudly separating himself from his neighbors.— Again, without passing the true boundaries or violating the legitimate use of the tongue, he may seek for novelty of expression that he may give a new air, a striking grace and effect to a familiar truth, or do justice to an original conception of his own. The freshness with which things come to his mind, the novel though natural views which he takes of them, justify and may require something unusual in his expression.

But it is time to put an end to remarks of this sort. My object, a moment ago, was to recommend prudence, and now I am again vindicating liberty. In leaving the subject, I may express a hope that my young friends will feel some pride in doing their part to keep the old landmarks distinct,—the ancient wells pure.

## CLEARNESS OF EXPRESSION AND OF THOUGHT.

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SINCE words are representations, however imperfect, of what passes in the mind, and are suggested and warranted by its operations and wants, we need not be surprised that they are used and spoken of as if they were themselves the things they stand for, and that they should be applied as tests or proofs of our thinking clearly and correctly. They are mental expressions; and in studying them we are studying the mind and human nature itself. Hence, for the practical purposes of rhetoric, we insist that a part of our training should direct us to inquire into the full force of words *as such*; that is, not merely with reference to a present special demand, but to make as perfect to our selves as we can the established instrument preserver, and medium of human thought, and have it always ready for service.

There is no occult method of obtaining this mastery of language. We are dealing with the



common property of a country, and must go to the common fountain of all good speech. But we have a serious work on our hands, and one that requires and will reward all the ability we can bring to it. We must observe how others speak and write who are thought to do well, and recall what we have done ourselves when, in our own belief at least, we knew perfectly what we meant, and what we were preparing to say. We must accustom ourselves to the analysis of terms, and follow down their history from their primitive use through the changes they have experienced and the various purposes to which they have been applied by many sagacious and self-relying minds. By such methods we may learn well how to assist our mental processes ; and they in turn, by their brightness and vigor, will promote an habitual force and vigor of expression. We hope, then, that the student will provide himself with an ample array of fully comprehended words to wait faithfully upon both his feeble thoughts and his strong ones.

But how are we to know that they will be appropriate till the ideas themselves are already well-defined in our minds ? We do not wish to involve ourselves in a matter that does not belong to us, and willingly leave it to others to clear up the difficulties that beset the relations between thought and language. But we may

venture to say (at least so far as rhetoric is concerned) that ideas cannot be well-defined in our minds, unless they are already wrapped in appropriate terms. We want to provide for such as may stand in need of help. Perhaps the service of suitable terms in settling and defining ideas may be illustrated by taking a most destitute and unpromising case. If their useful ministry is acknowledged in this, it will not probably be doubted in any. Suppose then that a man has dim and wandering phantoms in his brain,—not so properly ideas as glimpses of he hardly knows what. Of course, his signs for these will have a like uncertainty. Still there may be something in the cloud that is worth extricating. Accordingly, to so much of the phantom as he can seize upon he applies the test of what seem to him fitting words, that he may determine something. In this way he will very soon discover whether his mind is busy with a mere chimera, a shadow, that scorns definition and close handling, or he will see the dim conception swelling into full proportion in broad day.

The views here offered relate to ideas as they exist in the mind. When they are to be communicated, other considerations spring up. Many persons are well satisfied that if we but think clearly we must express ourselves clearly. It ought to be so, and naturally would be so.

But there are obstructions. Any man, who has had near acquaintance with the action of other minds, must often have had sufficient evidence of good thoughts there, struggling, and for a time in vain, to make their way forth successfully. The difficulties arising from constitutional infirmity, from want of practice in writing or public speaking, from ignorance of what readers and hearers require, are yet to be mastered. Consider, moreover, the faults arising from well-founded confidence. Rhetoricians have been careful to remind us that the more distinct our ideas are to ourselves, the less clearly we may place them before others. We forget that while a glance at a mere hint is enough for us, a great deal more than a hint is needed by them. Remember, then, the necessities of those whom you address. If they were all along, *of themselves*, in the same train of thought with you, the case might be different. But this you have no right to pre-suppose.\*

For want of a better single word to express appropriateness of diction and definiteness of ideas, and as it is very convenient to have one at hand, I shall include both under *Precision*, and proceed to some views of this quality and of the means of acquiring it.

And first, it is quite distinct from primness, from constrained formality, from a fastidious,

\* Whately's Elements of Rhetoric, Part iii. Chap. i. § 3.

over-exact manner of expression, denoting timidity or self-distrust in some, and in others an anxiety to apprise the reader of a certain forcible condensation, an oracular brevity in their style. A man may use few words, give his sentences the form of maxims, reject all ornament, avow it to be his highest ambition to be plain; simple and neat; still his compactness shall be mere affectation, and betray, every moment, vagueness, ostentation and awkwardness; while another shall be free, graceful and inclined to amplification, yet with precision for one of his marked excellences.

I do not suppose that definition or description will make so familiar a term more intelligible, and it may be enough for the present purpose to say that precision consists in the use of such words only as our ideas demand of right and necessity. It takes no notice of such distinctions between words as their being used for description, or passion, or narrative, or for the simplest possible statement, but holds itself to be an attainable and equally essential property in all cases, and insists equally upon its rights and upon its nicest limitations in all cases. It makes no compromise; it grants no dispensation; and it sees no reason for any. While then, *on its own account*, it requires nothing for beauty or luxury, it rejects on every account all needless circumlocution, and the use of epithets

or garniture of any kind for show. It regards not sound or appearance in the very few cases where attention to these must be at the expense of vigor and clearness. In short, it wages war with superfluity in every shape; for though superfluity is often graceful, and to many a delightful relief, it never fails to weaken the general effect.

Yet, as we have already hinted, precision is far from being niggardly and austere. It is too liberal and wise to interfere with natural differences of manner. Let the style be compressed or flowing, plain or gorgeous, abrupt or regular, temperate or heated; let the composition be in prose or verse, and the subject or occasion what it may; let the writer or speaker follow out his humor and taste, vary his tone as he sees best, and take his own way of producing effect,—precision is merely indifferent on all such points. But so far as any speech or writing is well done, it claims to be the strengthening, and in no small degree, the illuminating power throughout.

With all these high pretensions, it is a modest virtue, and its effect upon others may be great without their suspecting the cause. The orator and writer must be prepared to forego a part of their deserved praise, if they adhere to it; but they will be pleased to see those they address engaged upon something higher than the graces or even the energies of style; that they are not

following words as so many pleasing sounds which are lulling them into dreams, but that they feel on all hands the pressure of well-defined thoughts or earnest passion.

But what we are most concerned with is the effect of precision upon the speaker or writer himself. How invigorating is this modest virtue. A sincere, strong-minded man would have a fatal misgiving at his heart, a chill of conscious imbecility creeping over him, should he ever find himself uttering words at random, or for the purpose of filling up vacancies, or rounding off sentences, or as a sort of phantasmagoria to create illusions. But he is strengthened and animated by the constant succession of ideas distinctly embodied, and as visible to himself as he intends they shall be made to others.

One means of promoting precision is the habit of putting our thoughts on paper. I will not undertake to number the occasions when the practice would be useful, or to explain very confidently what it might seem affectation to call the mysterious power of a *recorded* word. My chief reliance is upon the evidence that a fair trial will furnish. I believe it will be found that there is no better way for a man to get clear and connected views of any subject that perplexes him, than to write as distinctly as he can the thoughts that occur to him upon it. I admit



that there is a difference in men in this respect, owing to a difference in their power of concentrating their attention upon a subject by mere force of will, and of carrying on protracted trains of thought in private meditation. But even those who are most practised and most successful in this way, — provided they are not too indolent or self-satisfied to make the experiment, — will find writing a great help. The process itself implies pains and deliberation. The eye being fixed upon the word, a sense of responsibility for the expression is quickened; and more care being required, the power of expression is likely to be better estimated and much enlarged. The eye being fixed upon the written record, a wholeness of view is probably better secured than it would be by sole reliance upon memory, and thus the opportunity and means of correction are always close at hand.

The practice may be recommended to a student meditating upon his regular exercise in original composition, with little to say, and that, as he thinks, very poor. His condition may not answer fully to that of the man we lately described as haunted with spectres of ideas; but such ideas as he has are uncertain and fleeting. He cannot take hold of anything definite and encouraging. Even his reading upon his subject distracts him with its variety of information and opinions. But let him once preserve, in the best



words he has at command, some one idea, which flits before him, and immediately a neighboring thought shall come to the light, and then others with ever-multiplying relations and an ever-increasing distinctness. He might have this idea floating about in his mind for hours as a subject of meditation or reverie, without any adequate conception of its bearings; but now, in a fixed, visible form, it seems to put his mind in order, and prepare it for manful enterprises which it had shrunk from before.

I suppose it is a common opinion that extemporaneous speaking excludes all preparation by writing, beyond the simplest noting down of prominent topics and of the places where they should be brought in. But by courtesy or usage many a celebrated discourse is called extemporaneous, which, it is well understood, was fully written out beforehand. It was not thus prepared to be repeated in the very words and order of the written paper; for this might deprive it most injuriously of the extemporaneous manner. But the orator sought by a study of this kind for a mastery of his subject, and of the best way to present it, which mere thinking would not give him. He is still at full liberty to catch inspiration from all that surrounds him in the assembly, from all that occurs at the time of speaking.

The effect of writing down our thoughts is often experienced when we least seek or desire

it. A man suffering under heavy affliction may have succeeded, by great effort, in suppressing all violent manifestation of grief. He is able to divert his thoughts and to strengthen himself by turning to his common occupations. He can speak calmly of his loss. He can meditate upon it by himself with many soothing and elevating influences. But let him trust himself to write of it to another, or even in his private journal, and the vagueness which had hung over it for a time begins to pass away. At every word it grows more distinct. The gates are again opened to the tide. A most natural exaggeration runs through his recollections, his descriptions and his images of the hopeless future. He seems to choose the very words that will add to his agony or despair, though, in truth, both are exasperated by the mere act of putting his thoughts into definite language. Of course, it would be mere prudence never to record what we may wish to forget.

I will close with another strictly practical view of the subject, which is obviously implied, however, in some previous remarks. We are apt to think that a scrupulous accuracy in the use of words may, in certain departments of literature and eloquence, be dispensed with. In controversies among theologians and metaphysicians, we are not surprised to hear much wrangling about the terms employed. The disputants

charge each other with ignorantly, carelessly or fraudulently perverting a word, and the cause of truth itself seems to depend upon settling its import. And there is no question that it ought to be settled by as exact definitions as can be framed. But shall we limit the demands of precision to cases like these? What I contend for is, that precise phraseology is equally essential, for impression, in a work of taste. Our popular or literary speech is as well-suited to affect the imagination and feelings, as that of the schools is to force home an argument upon the understanding. If you would act upon any power of the mind, you must present things to it in the way that nature or custom has made necessary.

It may be contended that the cases differ, since in an argument there is no safety, no conclusiveness, unless we put down everything in exact order, and with a severe adherence to definitions, as you would in a mathematical process. Whereas, in a novel or poem, for example, we depend upon men's interest in what we are saying to overlook omissions, or more properly, to gather from our hints, though slightly expressed, what we, in the heat of our feelings, could not stop to elaborate and complete.

There is a mistake, I apprehend, in both these statements. Even in an argument, let men be ever so cold, wary and captious, there is much left out by common consent, as there is also in

every-day conversation. So in a literary work, however brief, hurried and abrupt we may be, how much soever we may leave the reader to supply, yet the little we do say must be enough to give him the power and make it a delightful employment to him to supply it. A single word may set the mind on fire, but the word itself must burn.

And this reminds me that a writer should be guarded against the ambition of producing vast effects by single, striking words. It is one of the mistakes into which the young are apt to fall, that a certain glorious, exorbitant phraseology is the most impressive; that it denotes an exuberance of the poetical or oratorical power, which always carries its own excuse for its worst excesses;—at any rate, that the great majority are captivated by grand sounds more than by a conviction that some dull proser is uttering indisputable wisdom. If this were true, yet it is hardly fair to practise upon human infirmity; and it is almost as bad to fail in a duty we owe to literature. But I am satisfied that the fact is directly the other way. I believe that showy writing is always cold, and reaches but a very little way below the surface of men's minds; and that, take the world together, we shall, whether as orators or writers, always have the greatest and longest influence by substantial matter in the diction that becomes it.

There is the widest difference, you well know, between propriety and tameness, between simplicity and feebleness. We need not be cold to be correct, nor ostentatious to be eloquent. We may be as magnificent, as vehement as our nature will prompt or allow us to be, and all the while violate no rule of sound criticism ; indeed, all the while owe our success to a careful observance of precision.

The fear is not uncommon or unnatural that habits of vigilance must prevent or impair freedom and ease, since they imply habitual self-distrust. But what are we watchful against ? Does the well-grown boy lose all the ease and freedom of infancy, because accidents have taught him habits of prudence ? Are you likely to write with less courage and energy, because you have learned to be on your guard against errors that do you wrong and balk your purpose ? Never fear self-restraint, unless you practise it to succeed in something bad.

## USING WORDS FOR ORNAMENT.

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For some reason, which I may not fully understand, the criticisms which I have offered to the students upon their use of figurative language, appear to me to have been received with less favor, or with less apprehension of my meaning, than those upon other matters. Some have told me that they supposed I preferred to have words used in their proper instead of their secondary sense; and that I looked distrustfully upon whatever bore marks of ornamental or uncommon expression. I have taken no other pains to set them right than to say that my objections in cases like these were never to the form of speech itself, but were always directed to some particular point then before me; that I liked a good figure as well perhaps as any reader, but that I could not help being offended with what appeared to me to be a bad one, or an unskilful management of such as were unquestionably good.

This of course left room for difference of tastes; and this I wished. I allow full force to the argument founded on such a difference. But no one will seriously dispute that taste has its laws, and that there are laws for figurative speech as well settled as for any other use of language. A bold genius may sometimes violate them with grand effect; but what connection is there between this fact and a critical exercise at school or college? We are trying here to learn the law and the principle,—not the glorious dispensations which are allowed to great men. The teacher gives the pupil what he holds to be a good and safe rule; but he cannot undertake to instruct him in those licenses which are sometimes conceded to mature and commanding genius.

The rule then, as I understand it, I bring up as an authority against positive faults. I urge the reason of the rule and refer to what are deemed good examples. But none of you know how many passages, which, in strict rhetoric, violate the rule, I nevertheless suffer to remain untouched, because their departure from the canon is spirited; because it breaks the monotony of studied accuracy; and because it shows that the writer was heartily occupied with his thought and sincere in his expression. I never fear such faults as these. Still, it might not be safe to praise or even to take notice of them.



Probably, inexperienced writers would, in general, unduly value a brilliant and successful error into which they had fallen unconsciously, and begin to hold the rule in little respect. The ordinary violations of the rule, therefore, are the most proper objects of notice in such critical exercises as are appointed here.

These explanations remind me of the frequent remark that the written exercises of our students, on all occasions, are far from abounding in those ornaments and extravagances which are commonly expected in the young. I may have been less mindful of this from my attention being chiefly engaged to see whether they express themselves intelligibly in good English. But supposing the remark to be correct, how is the fact to be explained? Perhaps the genius of the place is severer than that which presides over some other academical retreats. Perhaps the importance attached by our people generally to good taste, makes the pupil dread that the moment he gives free course to his heart or fancy, and raises his diction above the common surface, he is venturing upon great literary perils. I can only say that, so far as I am concerned, I shall rejoice in your courageous use of any term or style which comes to you naturally. I am as little pleased as you can be with tame inoffensiveness. If I apply correctives, it will be for no other purpose than to remove what is incurably

defective, and to make more perfect what is at heart and in the grain sound. What I have now to say of figurative language will show my estimate of it pretty clearly.

I intend to take only one view of it; but I must first observe of the word *figure*, that it is used for different things, and often indefinitely. It is sometimes applied to modes of expression very distinct from those which come under the notice of rhetoric;—for example, to the various ways of stating a syllogism, according to the position of the middle term. Moreover, rhetoricians are not agreed as to the proper extent of its use in their own department.

If we next attend to popular speech, we shall find that most persons seem to employ the word without troubling themselves to inquire into its origin and history, or the definitions that have been given of it. And I doubt whether a knowledge of the definitions and derivation would help them much. As far as I have observed the popular use of the term, I have found it to be a vague expression for an ornamented, glowing, eloquent, poetical manner, but with a reference, most commonly, to metaphors and comparisons. A figurative writer is understood to be a man of fancy, perhaps of display, who seeks to animate and delight us, and as different as possible from one who addresses simple statements, in homely words, to the understanding.

You perceive that this gives no answer to the question,—How came this word to be applied to a certain character of style and language?

Sometimes the following whimsical explanation may be heard. As the word *figure*, in its literal sense, is applied to objects of sight or touch, it has been supposed that language was called figurative when, in our fancies, it gave a kind of sensible form or visibility to our ideas. This notion probably arose from the fact that we have so many tropes which are founded on resemblance, and that we often use similes to make our thoughts clearer and more striking through a likeness which we can all feel between them and things outward. The material and spiritual are constantly united for this purpose. But how should the inventor of this theory have forgotten the innumerable tropes and other classes of figures (as they are all called), in which there is not the slightest reference to a resemblance between the things thus connected, and sometimes when there is even a grotesque opposition?

The word, in its rhetorical sense, is itself a trope, and means, I suppose, some recognized and well-defined *form* or *shape* of language, in which there is commonly a departure, more or less striking, from the original or proper use. I shall have frequent occasion to employ it as a general term in the remarks that follow, without much regard to precision. But where I must

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speaking of any particular class of figures, I will call it by name.

I wish now to direct your attention to what I consider as a grave misapprehension in regard to the office of figures generally. This misapprehension is, that they are designed chiefly, if not wholly, for ornament; that they are superinduced and not essential; that they are purposely added, as if episodically, for brilliancy, and are not a substantial expression, a perfectly natural and unsought vesture of our thoughts. Here I have something to concede. I admit to the full that they are beauties, ornaments, bright gems, if you please, in the black, rough rock, or it may be a secret source of light which mildly irradiates a whole scene. In our youthful reading, the next thing that attracts us, after a good story, is the beauty of similitudes. They are so luminous as well as picturesque, that we regard them as luxuries. They are our amusement. We love rich foliage and blossoms, and think little at the moment of the solid trunk and the slowly-forming fruit. And later in life, when we are graver and more thoughtful, when we are more easily taken with what we know to be useful, we are still delighted with the splendid images of poetry and eloquence. We are willing to pick them out of the delicate work into which they have been most happily wrought, and look at them, recall them, exhibit them to others, for their independent beauty.

Think what language would be, as a source of pleasure only, if it had not the single class of tropes called metaphors. It would be as inelegant, spiritless and impoverished as our minds if taste, fancy and the affections were torn from them. Suppose that the metaphor had been introduced into discourse at a late period; that we had just discovered that we had capacities to invent and enjoy a far more affecting mode of expression than the literal, unsuggestive one to which we had been confined; and it would seem as if a new creation were opened, and new delights were crowding upon us on every side. Old things that we had used from necessity only or for convenience, would take new forms and serve new purposes. It would seem as if the touch of magic had been laid on nature and on man himself. New powers and sensibility are brought to light. A new-born spirit of beauty is shed upon the earth, upon the works of men's hands and upon human life. Such a change in language supposes the introduction of poetry itself.

While we can admit then that there is, to some extent, a glory and beauty in figures themselves, we cannot guard too carefully against the notion that they are but accidental embellishments; that they are not an essential part of composition; that they are attached to it, not woven into it. If a man uses a figure heartily

and properly, it will be as indispensable to his full communication of his meaning as any form of speech ever can be. He did not go out of his way for it. He did not spend time in shaping and setting it. It came of its own will to incorporate itself with his thought; and being with him the most natural expression, he would do harm by adopting another. Moreover, the figures that some admire for their supposed independent beauty, derive their power over us, first of all, from their being naturally suggested by the thought which they illustrate and adorn; and if, from a habit of contemplating them separately or from any other cause, the connection should be lost sight of, the images will lose no small part of their charm.

The metaphor has just been named for its beauty and as an object of taste. But we should take a narrow view of its use, if we saw nothing more in this commonest of the tropes. We owe to it an invigorating exercise of our minds in the analysis required to discern the true points of analogy or resemblance which justify the use of the metaphor at all. We owe to it a habit of watchfulness, which we acquire by guarding against the errors and deceptions to which we are exposed from constantly employing or hearing words that have many related significations. On the other hand, should a word maintain inflexibly its original import, and refuse alliance

with anything but its proper object, it will cost us nothing but the pains of learning what it means, and it will carry us not a step beyond itself. Besides these good offices of the metaphor, it does another not less important by calling in the aid of imagination and fancy,—and through these of wit, humor, pathos, and of other agencies,—to illustrate, enliven and enforce ideas, perhaps such as are least attractive, least able to speak for themselves. This service it renders in a brief, uninterrupted, familiar way which adds to its charm and effect. We must then be prepared for more than grace, beauty and pleasure in a class of words like this.

Suppose a man should estimate poetry as many estimate figures. Suppose he should regard it as a delicate, musical, highly-finished, and even gorgeous work of art, designed to produce a pleasurable excitement or luxurious repose. This view, to a certain extent, is right enough. Poetry may properly be regarded, in one aspect, as a sort of Paradise for the senses. It exhilarates us by its various delights, as the earth by its forms and colors and sounds. But are we to rest in the pleasure, or in the beauty as giving us pleasure? How childish it is to say that the grand design of poetry is to please, when the remark is applied to *King Lear* or to *Paradise Lost*. Is it said that in these cases the substantial thought must be the same, whatever the



mode of presenting it, and that we owe nothing to the poet but a better manner? How can this be? Would every man be able to conceive the substantial thought as Milton and Shakspeare did? The truth poetically conceived is substantially different from any other conception of it. The difference is not, as some may think, in the mode of exhibiting it. All those devices and beauties of the poetic style, which some fondly think might be separated from the main thought and admired as distinct decorations, are but so many results and indications of poetical conception. In no sense are they merely sources of pleasure; but they are also the means by which we are enabled to obtain more or less adequate ideas of what is passing in the poet's mind. Let us then remember that however we may delight in figurative speech or any of the graces of poetry, our estimate of them must be made according to the spirit, justness and originality with which they set forth the matter in hand.

Closely allied to the idea that figures are embellishments purposely attached to our work, is another misapprehension; namely, that we are to seek for them, toil for them, do our best to invent them. Here it is proper to make a distinction. Labor and search are allowable when we stand in need of parallel cases to illustrate or impress some difficult proposition, and when they will not come to us of themselves; and

should the parallel both answer our purpose and prove at the same time to be an ornament, so much the better. The ornament is clear gain. I do not suppose, however, that labor and search will often be necessary, if a man is an active thinker. He will probably have more similes suggested by his course of thought than he will care to employ. Neither do I suppose that those which are obtained by study, however exact and pertinent they may be, will, on the whole, be so spirited and so naturally commingle with the principal thought, as those which spring up with the thought and are directly suggested by it. On some not otherwise inviting page of Locke, I have found a perfect illustrative comparison,—yet so tender and sad that the highest strain of elegy could not refuse it. In the midst of Franklin's gravest reflections I have met with an argumentative comparison so lively and picturesque, that satirical or didactic verse could not have desired more, and yet doing the work of conviction and persuasion at a blow. Neither of these bore marks of having been sought for.

But the misapprehension to which I was directing your attention, relates to our seeking after figures for decoration. There is a very common and just impression that they give life to composition, that they arouse and keep up the attention, by their grace and vivacity. Why then should not every one, who aims to be a useful as

well as popular writer or speaker, make it a business to acquire them and have them ready for use? Many a poet of cheerful fancy is believed to have fabricated a thought for no other object than to place by its side a sparkling illustration which was waiting for an occasion. The wary punster, perhaps in concert with others, gives a turn to conversation which may offer a fair opportunity for an anxious jest. The diligent collector of quotations expects the time when he shall coolly turn them to account with an off-hand facility. These artifices show that the parties are aware of what will please, and seem to warrant in some degree the practice we are speaking of.

No doubt it is one way to be popular and attractive; and mere parade of any kind has a like effect. Mere startling oddity or cloudy mysticism may be popular and attractive, may be said to arouse and keep up attention, though they fix it wholly upon themselves. He who hides good matter under a heap of flowers, may be a greater favorite for his decorations, than he might have been if his good matter had been distinctly seen standing alone. But our present business is not with pretenders and showmen, but with good writers and with permanent principles. Our warning to the young writer is, never to suppose that there is any genuine vigor and warmth in embellishment. The peril is, false glitter and

universal tawdriness. The idea being once adopted that figures are essential to vivacity and a sure mark of elegance, — they will be brought in on all occasions. Ambition and habit will soon make the manufacture the easiest thing in the world. Let a man's original resources be very slender and his fancy most inert; yet, if he have ingenuity and a love of display, he will find in the commonplaces of poetry, in fable, in history, in new inventions and old customs, in a resort to any quarter, something that he can force into his service. Nothing is more easily filled than a toy-shop. A little varnish and gold leaf and paint will make almost anything look well enough to inconsiderate eyes.

But while we condemn this show of made-up finery, we must not forget that caution is needed in a wholly different quarter. The imagination itself, under the most genuine excitement, may pour forth its real beauties as rapidly and profusely as the false rhetorician can fabricate his trinkets, and with scarcely less injury, unless its exercise is tempered by a well-formed taste. There is no other security against its unseasonable incursions.

## PERMANENT LITERARY FAME.

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THERE are tokens, it is supposed, which may enable the reflecting and sagacious to be trustworthy prophets of an author's future place in the judgments and affections of men. At the least, by inquiring into the matter they may settle to their own satisfaction some points that appear to be pertinent and of importance. They are to consider whether a book has properties that are essential to its perpetuity. Of course they must bring to the investigation, or obtain from it, a knowledge of readers as well as of writers, and try to discover something which may always be relied upon in the tastes of one party, and in the means which the other has chosen to gratify them. My principal object is to suggest some of the points that may occur to them in the course of their inquiry.

I shall begin with citing a passage from the correspondence of Richardson, the novelist, in which he takes up the subject at an early stage.

‘I am of opinion,’ he says, ‘that it is necessary for a genius to accommodate itself to the mode and taste of the world it is cast into, since works published in this age must take root in it, to flourish in the next.’\* This remark is not cited for the purpose of controverting it; else, we might object to its urging upon authors an undue deference to the demands of their contemporaries. We might further object to its want of accuracy; for some men of genius, though they resisted prevailing tastes and opinions, have at once carried the world with them; others have triumphed, after death, over the neglect or unpopularity of more than their own age; and some writings of great consideration and authority are never classed among works which are objects of general notice and admiration. The closing remark, however, in the passage just quoted, may be so interpreted as to suggest a truth that deserves attention.

In one sense, then, a man of letters must take root in his own age, to flourish afterwards. Though he should live in what he thinks to be a very inauspicious state of things, and be provoked to say, in contempt or sorrow, that he has fallen on evil days, that no one is ready to receive him, that he must look beyond the present for his judges; yet, in making this sad avowal, he forgets that from the men of that barren and

\* Correspondence, &c. Vol. I. p. 121.

benighted age, as well as from himself and his reading, he must learn enough of mankind and of what constitutes human life, to make himself welcome in the ever-varying ages that are to follow. The warm spirit of humanity which he is to breathe into all coming time, must be kindled then, and in great part by means of the things about him; — how true soever it may be that the immortal element will soar above the instruction which developed it, and drop, day by day, the aids that might now be hindrances. If his studies lie in any sphere which connects him with the common feelings and interests of his kind, his school must be in his daily walks among men. Human nature in books alone will not serve him. He must study it also in the living subject. His neighbors, rude and unlettered it may be, must teach him how to read it. He must prove it by the test of his own experience, and set it before the distant ages as he learned it in his own home.

But he is not bound to the age in which he lives by its merely offering him the best means of studying men and life. It further presents him with the language of his country in the state in which he must use it. However delightedly and profitably he may study it through its whole history, and however originally he may apply its rich stores or even add to them, he is to employ it mainly as the speech best fitted for the men of



his day, because it best expresses the mind, the tastes and the wants of his day. In fact, so far as it has present peculiarities, it owes them to circumstances under which he and his countrymen have grown up, and which therefore have become part of himself and of them. To depart from it rudely would be an act of violence, and ultimately, if not immediately, take much from his usefulness and attraction.

Connected with the language, as it exists in his day, are the forms or habits of thought which then prevail, and the current of opinion, so far at least as it has marks of constancy. These will and must have power over him. He will naturally and obviously partake of them. He ought to be as familiar with the spirit and tendencies of the times as if he lived and wrote merely for the passing hour; not for the sake of winning the voices of his neighbors by unworthy compliance with their tastes, or (which would be as little creditable) to defy, ridicule and exasperate them; but that he may study mankind in the people about him, and human life in the aspect which they present of it. He may be strongly tempted to make brilliant sketches of the times for immediate effect; but a book need not be ephemeral because its subject is of the present day, and though its materials be drawn from the humblest quarter or from the most frivolous experience of the highest. He must then main-

tain, at every hazard, his self-respect, his independence and originality ; but he should not for a moment wish to throw off his allegiance to the present, and make himself an artificial, complex thing, composed of selected excellencies which he has discovered in various countries and times.

We need not name other ties that bind an author to his own age. What we would make prominent is, that he must recognize and know how to employ the facts before him. He can borrow none from any other quarter that will fill the place and do the work of those which make up his personal experience at home. The impress that he may bear of his familiarity with other countries and times will never be quite so natural and agreeable as that which he receives from the age and scenes in which he has been brought up. His faculties must be brought out and his character moulded by powers from abroad ; and those which are nearest and the first to be felt are almost sure to prevail. Among these are his condition of life, the facts that press early upon his notice, familiar objects and occurrences, his associates, occupations and amusements. In this seemingly straitened and humble sphere, the prevailing religion of the country, its climate and natural features, its inspiring traditions, its old social usages, its political revolutions, and, perhaps, its long nourished jealousy

of rival neighbors, are exercising their more imposing but not more active influences.

Here then, at home, a power not readily defined is silently acting upon us all, as if to do its work more effectually by never putting us upon our guard. It begins with us so early, and prepares us so naturally to take in the variety of great and minute experiences which we must pass through, that the process never seems to be irregular or disturbed, and the result, as we might suppose, is sufficiently harmonious. We are not like travellers abroad, to whom things are not only new, but felt to be new,—each demanding attention to itself, and the relations of which to each other must be carefully studied, before the stranger can give to all collectively an air of unity and consistency. The most perfect sameness in all that is external to us, the unvaried repetition of our lives from day to day could not be more free from dissonance and struggle, in its effect upon the mind, than the experience of a native within his own borders. Yet there is as little of monotony as of effort. The harmony that grows up in this endless diversity is not the mere work of instinct. We in part create it for ourselves—we pass through changes peacefully, but not without consciousness and intelligence.

Such a course of early, out-of-school education does more than contribute to form the mind of individual writers. It gives a peculiar and uni-

versally recognized distinction to men as belonging to a community, and, through them, to its literature. Hence it may be thought proper that I should speak of other powers which are acting to produce this effect. But I make no attempt at a full enumeration, and readily omit several which to some minds may appear of first rate importance in laying open a subject of this kind. I have not named original differences of race as a cause of national and literary diversity, for I am chiefly concerned to speak of external influences. Partly for the same reason, I do not take into the account the original differences of individual minds, and, preëminent among these, the varieties of genius. Besides, if we look at the matter strictly, these are not, perhaps, to be regarded as peculiar to any soil or any age of the world. Though we ascribe to them what is called individuality, yet they do not set a discriminating mark upon literature as national, except so far as they are touched and shaped by the same influences which act upon the mass of the people. Again, I have not named science, letters and art among the forming agencies of which I am speaking; for, important as they are in regard to the development of the faculties, to intellectual enterprise, to refinement, to liberality of opinion, to our pleasures, to our resources of thought, and to the fame of individuals and states, — yet they are the common property of

advanced civilization everywhere ; and, being freely interchanged, they are more likely to bring men of different nations to some degree of resemblance, than to strengthen the distinctions between them. I do not know that we can so properly say of even the literature of one's own country that it gives a character to the people, as that it springs from and expresses a character already forming,—that it carries forward a work already begun, and quickens the process and gives stability to the results. Once more, I have not thought that the course of these remarks required me to consider the unquestionable fact, that both national and individual character are less observed and less prominent in some writers and some classes of composition, than in others.

Passing by these and other omissions, the view of the subject actually presented may appear altogether imperfect, because it takes in local and present influences only, though we profess to be considering the means of gaining general and lasting favor as a writer. We began with the necessity of his 'taking root in his own age,' including in the idea his country and its history for the time ; and this period will be thought very inconsiderable, as it certainly is when looked at as a mere amount of duration. But it must not be regarded as a separate fragment. Especially, if it be an era remarkable for light and civilization, it must have required many ages to

produce it. The long and changeful experience of a whole people, widely connected perhaps with other states, is concentrated and living in our own day. At least, we have all that was worth surviving. Then, too, it has, no doubt, its glowing future, surpassing, as we think, all that has yet been, and soon to be the crowded present of other generations. Certainly, this is not a very narrow school for any writer's preparation.

Still, some vague fancy may be entertained that, since nothing will answer such a purpose as we hold out, but a broad, comprehensive spirit, with something of the infinite in its contemplations,—a whole individual mind, absorbed in abstractions and universals, freed, as far as may be, from the limitations and perversions to which we are exposed in the common course of education and daily life, accustomed to look upon men, not severally but 'in the gross,' and to take world-wide views of human affections, relations, capacities and desires, would be the most proper power to act forever upon the whole race. But, even if it were desirable, we shall never meet with such a mind either among great or ordinary men. To expand our natures to the utmost, and make men as universal as they can be made, they must pass through the discipline or instruction of particular facts, minute, it may be, and seemingly insignificant; of common



things near at hand, such as I have already named; of influences the most accidental and unconnected, and which probably are quite unobserved and beyond our direct control. Often from the little events of our lives come the grandest conceptions and the boldest enterprises. The sympathies which, by and by, are to comprehend the race, must begin with love of our neighbors, however obscure and uninspiring they may be.

But why do we demand and even press as an essential thing, this strongly-marked, local, personal and national character, in a literature which we all agree is intended to affect other times and countries, besides those in which it had birth? Why not drop, as far as may be, all that is signally peculiar, and carefully retain what is universal in its tone and spirit? Why should we shut up an author's power within the borders of his own country, and the period in which he may still have something of a modern air? To this it may be answered generally, and in accordance with the view already taken, that we cannot have a great and commanding literature unless it grow out of the home character and experience of the writers. A few points, which seem to be well established by facts, will be a sufficient, if not a very formal reply to the questions just stated, and probably remove all apprehension of undue restraints upon authors.



If, then, we turn to readers, native and foreign, and of whatever period, to learn how they are affected by the strongest characteristics of a great writer, we observe, as a general thing, that the more distinct the stamp he bears of his time and country, and we may add of true individuality, the more definitely and effectually is his whole mind brought to other minds, the world over; and the more sure it is to keep its hold upon them, in spite of any changes which fall short of a revolution in human nature itself. Such an effect might naturally be looked for, so far as his own people are concerned; but in the eyes of foreigners, too, his peculiarities of whatever description, if original and genuine, will have a force and vivacity and a sort of personal confirmation in them, which will easily break through the obstructions that a foreign speech, or foreign habits of any kind may have raised. I dwell not upon the advantage of having a fine foreign study in our possession, which may animate our curiosity and try our learning and skill. But I contend that the strange things in a foreign writer are not barely tolerated as being first of all intended for his countrymen, and of course perplexing to all others; but that they will be welcomed for the pungency and native sincerity with which they exhibit not only what is new to us, but sometimes what is in strong contrast with our ways of thinking and acting. The writer's

familiarity with things at home and his pride in them give a confident freedom to thought and style, and something of that rough bravery and indifference to foreign doubts and censure which are far from being discreditable to the most genuine patriotism. He will be liked the better for it by the warm-hearted and discriminating of all countries, — so sure of favor is a sound, healthy feeling or sentiment faithfully addressed to our common nature.

To tamper, then, with the matter and style for better reception abroad, would show how fatally an author may misapprehend the tastes and capacities of his readers, and how strangely he may forget that readers of all nations demand of him to be just to himself and his opportunities for their sakes as well as for his own. If we could have an old Greek or a modern Frenchman writing in the proper character of a citizen of the world, we should see very clearly the advantage of leaving men of letters to the inspiration and training of their homes. Though men say that Shakspeare wrote for the world, they do not mean to deny that but for Warwickshire, London and the Age of Elizabeth, he would have written for nobody.

A question may arise, whether the domestic education which we have spoken of as inevitable, will not confine writers to domestic subjects. While all agree that abstract truth or general

principles belong not to time and place, but are equally open and inviting to all cultivated minds, yet, when we are to write of human affairs, of actions and characters, and of scenes in the outward world,—such topics, for example, as have a fit place in epics, plays, descriptive writing, or in narratives real or fictitious,—should not the home-training, which forms the mind, direct it to home-subjects as the most proper for its exercise and most likely to be successfully treated? Shall an English dramatist take a Roman for his hero, and ‘surround him with the life and manners of the ancient city?’ Shall a German novelist give us a story of Aspasia and her times? Shall Moore be encouraged to consult libraries full of Eastern scenes, habits and creeds, that he may prepare a Persian or Egyptian tale?

Questions of this character would have sounded strangely to the Romans in the early period of their literature; for their dependence on foreign examples and supplies had been unlimited. Yet, in time, such questions were to have an answer in the commendation which Rome bestowed on her writers for turning homeward at last for their materials. Our own authors, but a few years since, were thought to look too much abroad for models, and to be unmindful of the original resources of their country, and of the fact that they must expect distinction chiefly from their masterly use of their peculiar wealth. We hear

little of this complaint now. With regard to the writers of both countries, the dependence and deference we have spoken of are easily accounted for, and, under the circumstances of each, appear to have been as natural as their ultimate resort to their own treasures. It seems to be in the course of things that a decided national spirit and character, slowly growing up and gaining vigor under the peculiar influences which surround a people at home, should, in due time, direct its writers to topics that are closely connected with these influences, and which are favorable to the establishment of a patriotic sentiment in respect to everything national. The idea of a strictly original literature seems to imply as much as this.

But to have a literature of our own does not imply the exclusion of foreign materials. The practice of writers everywhere, their success, and the resulting fame of nations are against it. A liberal spirit, a healthy curiosity, and the strong inclination of many gifted minds are against it. Indeed, so far as impression and success are concerned, there seems to be no objection to an author's selecting a topic from abroad, which would not lie against his attempting a work of pure imagination, or against a painter's or sculptor's choosing his subjects from what quarter he pleases. Even the jealousy of patriotism need not be alarmed, for we may be assured that

however remote the field which he explores, the settled character of his mind will show itself in all its work. The noble studies which it finds in foreign countries and libraries, will fall into cheerful subordination to a mind already formed and established under native impulses and direction.

Let us then leave an author to his sound discretion. If he can throw himself heartily into his foreign subject, or his imaginary world; if he can make himself so far at home with his real or invented persons and scenes, that they become both to himself and to us objects of clear conception and full sympathy; his purpose may be as well answered, and his book shall be as thoroughly a part of national literature, as if he were engaged upon what are properly called domestic facts. Certainly, we impose no hard condition upon a man of genius when we require thus much of him. Neither do we lessen his merit or endanger his triumph by admitting that he may show on every page that he is not a Roman or Persian, though he should assume to speak as one of these; that the stamp of his age, the atmosphere of ideas about him at home, the spirit, the genius of his country may constantly betray his origin. His own people are not likely to be more mindful of his violation of rigid truth and propriety by the infusion of his own character and a national tone, than he is himself; and

probably they will care as little for it as he does. There will be no shock and no serious misconception. A foreign reader will not be offended but amused rather to see how differently the same things are viewed by writers of various countries. Shakspeare's Brutus is not mine, exclaims the Frenchman; and in the same tone would he speak of Hamlet, should he try to reduce the ideal to the French apprehension and taste. Still, no reader of any nation doubts that he is contemplating, in the poet's ideal, a strong conception of as real a personage as can be found in the actual, common world. One basis of character, one body of truth is acknowledged by all,—a distinct original is in the minds of all, however it may be modified by the genius of writers or the apprehension of readers,—and this is enough.

It is not without reason, however, that readers are anxious lest accounts of grave matters of fact should be mutilated or clouded by the intrusion of individual views and impressions. I do not know that a wise old Athenian (though admitting the general accuracy with which notorious facts are related) would be perfectly satisfied with the modern historian's interpretation of the policy and motives of the Greeks, or of innumerable obscure agencies which appear to have greatly affected the course of affairs. Will distrust and caution ever be wholly needless in re-

gard to historical statements? Nevertheless, we think it something to have the views of a fair and sagacious mind, upon transactions which are variously represented. It is in the variety of exhibitions that we often find an opening to the highest certainty which can be reached concerning human affairs. Even the distorted accounts of a strong modern partisan are not without use in giving a new face to ancient things, which had been long and carelessly regarded in but a single light, and in showing us how the same human nature, under varied impulses, will find a proper aliment, in the same topic, for the most diverse creeds, prejudices and tempers. Finally, it may be doubted whether the historians of their own country and the biographers of their own great men differ less, or disfigure truth less, than they do in treating of foreign states or foreign worthies.

I have here suggested, as a point likely to occur to those who are inquiring into a writer's prospects of long-continued remembrance, that to be well received, not only at home in his own day, but in times and countries far from, and, it may be, very unlike his own, he must be educated like other people, under influences that will make him national, and, to some extent, a representative of the period in which he lives. But this far-spread and perpetual welcome implies



that, notwithstanding the alleged narrowing tendencies of a writer's home education, and though his studies should be of subjects the most particular and minute,—of the plant by his own brook-side, or of the mountain shepherd who takes care of his flock,—his tone and spirit must be eminently comprehensive and unexclusive. He need not be thinking every moment of universal beauty or of the whole race to which he is bound; but he must have and show that pervading sense of both, which will give to his most studied individual sketch and to meditations the most personal, a wide relation, and the power of moving an unperverted mind everywhere. Without entering into the general subject here presented, which, like that we have already considered, has been often and variously treated by others, let us attend for a moment to one or two mistakes which may be fatal to the diffusive spirit we would recommend.

Early in this lecture, I represented an author as saying, in his dissatisfaction with the present, that he would appeal to other times to pass upon his merits. This he may reasonably do, if he simply means that he will *wait* for the remote verdict. He has in mind some supposed, perhaps some real present hindrance to his success, which, in the course of years, may cease. But if he also means that he will *write* with reference only to the coming ages, and of course

watchfully exclude his contemporaries from his study and sympathy, we have a very different case before us. He brings into view the whole subject of preparing a work with a distinct, positive regard to those who are to judge it, or, rather, whom he is willing to accept as judges. Here we have one manifestation of the exclusive spirit. In a different mood, he might resolve to write with sole reference to a particular state of society and public sentiment, to the distinctions of rank and education, to the tastes of his peculiar set, or even of some one valued literary friend. In every instance, the idea of writing broadly of and for mankind, or generously from his own nature, is carefully shut out.

Here let it be conceded, however, that we should not condemn all attempts to fit one's self for certain classes of readers. An author, I presume, may properly condescend to human infirmity for the sake of disarming the prejudices of custom and the hostility of ignorance, or of preparing men in still other ways for what may do them good. So, the untried, feeble capacities of children may be assisted by the kindly bending of the greatest minds to meet their wants. The utmost prudence, and gifts hardly to be distinguished from genius will be required so to perform these offices as not to excite resentment by a patronizing air of conciliation, or the contempt of the young by a weak prattle that infants

might scorn even among themselves. But an author is not called upon to make sacrifices and concessions, he finds no countenance given to narrow self-adaptation, in the high departments of literature, where both writers and their critics are presumed to be of full strength and competent judgment, and alike eager for good thoughts and patient of none other. Here, at least, he is expected to be independent, self-confiding, and as universal in his views and spirit as his genius will allow him to be.

Our attention has just before been directed to some offended and perhaps self-sufficient author, who rejects the present and its judgments and resolves to write exclusively for readers of a future age. He requires a little notice, for his position is peculiar. What shall he do for that vague mass, the coming generations, to which he appeals? He can never know what will meet their demands, supposing them to differ from the common demands of man's nature, as they exist in his own day or as he finds them in all the past. He can propose nothing definite to himself when he speaks of a better time to come. Instead of beginning with men now, and preparing them, however slowly, for his perfectly independent views;—instead of trying to make his own age do something towards raising the character of its successors, and fitting them to judge the past, to judge even itself, — he presumes,

without one fact to guide him, to divine what men will be, and what they will require and honor at some hidden, future day.

Then consider the restraint which he lays upon his freedom and originality. He may ask how this can be when he has an unknown and unlimited world to expatiate in. I answer,—for that very reason. He has no objects, no boundaries, no outline, no guiding, strengthening, enriching definiteness of purpose. He is in the midst of vacancy, and must fill it, if at all, not by invention but by laborious conjecture. If his fancy should be occupied with some ideal state of things, yet what he prepares for his imaginary readers will of course be ineffectual for the men and women who are to walk the earth, age after age. It may be well-wrought, artistically considered, and pass for grotesque or fantastic fiction, but for nothing else. We need not fear that many writers, however fondly or querulously they may insist upon slighting the present and living only in the future, will practically carry out their idea in full; but to any one, whose ambition inclines at all that way, it may be suggested that he will find, after abandoning universal humanity as it is, and rejecting the precious instruction which he had received from facts, that nothing remains for him to do but to make artificial conceits for the wonder of some far-off generation in which he must be a stranger.

In our dislike of a narrow, exclusive spirit, we should be careful lest we charge the most liberal minds with it; for it must be owned that in their bold, engrossing speculations and their eager sympathy with a few kindred inquirers, they may seem to have passed within a circle from which the many are excluded. We may hear it objected to an author that he writes for a small class of favorites. But that the number is small may not be a matter of choice with him. He might be glad to have it otherwise. Still, if he cannot draw a crowd, let him not be called exclusive for doing his best to instruct those who can and will hear. So, as to his writing for his favorites or admirers only,—this may mean no more than that he writes for all who can understand and relish him; and, by and by, these may be all the world.

It is sometimes said of an eminent poet or philosopher that he forms a school for himself, at least to begin with, and that he aims directly at creating or developing in his disciples the power to go along with him;—so much deeper does he enter into subjects than men have already gone. This is in the main true; and his course is a perfectly liberal one, and the only one that he could profitably take. He is forever educating men, either personally or through his followers, by making them better acquainted with their capacities and wants, or by appealing

to their awakened consciousness for the reception of truths which they may be said to have been waiting for. This is true not only of him, but, more or less, of all long-remembered writers; and, in consequence of some accidental direction given to men's thoughts, an unexpected light may break upon them from writings which have been in their hands for ages. But let it be observed that the eminent poet or philosopher of whom we speak, (whether he has a school or not) addresses himself to the human soul everywhere, and equally to the men of his own and of all time. He would have all men for his disciples, that they may all have new ideas and pleasures. There is not one sign of his seeking to accommodate himself to their humors or prepossessions. He might do so if he had a temporary purpose to gain; but he cannot do so, when his aim is to pass beyond modes, tastes and questions of the day, and penetrate to the never-changing principles and the never-supplied wants of our nature;—when his office may be to displace darling errors and revolutionize long-seated opinions.

Let us now observe the impression which an author makes, to learn whether it indicates a firm hold on public favor. We do not promise him, or require for him, in the distant, tranquil future, the bustling admiration of his contempo-

raries; but he must have qualities that will secure men's sober love and gratitude in their homes, in their solitary walks, in their studies, in the highest and the most familiar intercourse of social life, through all time, and, to a degree, in every reading country. To be immortal as a writer is more than to have a place among the customary tenants of large libraries, to be hidden perhaps for ages; and, when brought to light, like an embalmed corpse of the East, for the examination of the curious, — to be wondered at chiefly for having lasted so long. It is more than to have a deserved name for wisdom and genius, if these come not with a gracious as well as an awakening power. The writer, whom we presume to call immortal, must have life in the hearts, the experience and the wants of men. He must be essential to them. He must be a part of them, of their pride, their preferences, their opinions, their actions. He must hear on every side, forever, the voice of favor and thanks, and make it their honor more than his that he is still remembered and desired.

To be at the full tide of popularity in one's own time is not in the least a sign, as many fear, that there will be an ebb in the next age; though, probably, the surface will be less disturbed. A single generation may give clear evidence of what will be thought of a man forever. An individual may have a movement in



his heart towards a man of genius, which will be answered by other hearts in all time. The man of genius himself may be inspired to proclaim, without vanity, that he shall not wholly die. We naturally enough distrust present celebrity, because it may be owing to accident and perishable influences. For the same reason, we may not feel the slightest uneasiness at present neglect. It was no pledge, to be sure, and neither was it a hindrance of Milton's awful name in the world to-day, that he was passed by in his own time. This simply denoted what the time was.

The mere amount of an author's contemporary popularity, of the excitement he produces, and of the importance attached to everything that relates to him, will give no sure indication of his future standing. It is the kind of estimation that he obtains, the kind of interest that he awakens, which is to settle the matter. Does he give us new impulses, new views, new mental exercises, which we receive as perfectly natural and as all our own; and is this done in language and a style which our hearts tell us were suggested to him by his immediate experience, — by the things he was saying? Are we sure that the agitation he produces is not a feverish or delirious transport, into which we are thrown by something that is startling merely because it is monstrous, or paradoxical, or asso-

ciated with some urgent and transitory passions or prejudices of the day? Whatever be the subject, — new or old, familiar or strange, — do we value the book first of all as a picture of an original mind, and for what that mind has done for the subject, rather than owes to it? Is the power we acknowledge and extol a generous and strengthening and kindly one to ourselves, encouraging and elevating our faculties, and drawing us into near communion with itself, instead of reminding us of our inferiority?

After settling these and similar points concerning the impression he makes, — if we need any external evidence of his probable future position, we may compare him with those writers who have long pleased and are considered as established in the world's memory, and see if he has their marks of health and long life. If we are satisfied in this, as well as in the other respects, that he has made out a good claim for himself, we may trust his name to the 'dim and perilous' future, with as little fear as we should to a living friend.

There may be times in which he is no longer popular. The larger part of his writings, though still kept in print by virtue of the precious residue and by the literary importance of his name, may fall into neglect and to most readers be unknown. Things for which he was once most valued may give place to new-discovered or

more highly prized qualities in himself. Accident may depress for a season the department of literature in which he excels, or other eminent men may walk in his steps and seem ready to shake his supremacy. But we know that he will not be ultimately superseded, or for any cause perish, as surely as we know that the frame of man's mind and the true fountains of his happiness will never be changed.

I would not be thought to rely unreasonably upon the *impression* which a book makes, as an indication of its probable destiny. Clearly, this impression cannot be said to denote anything, at the beginning, but the opinion of an individual; and this, we all know, may be indefinite; it may suffer change; it may be misapprehended by others; and, if understood aright, it may be resisted. Cannot some method be devised of settling literary questions authoritatively? If there are undisputed, material facts before us; if there are unchangeable laws of taste, susceptible of definition and pretty direct application; if the nature of man is ever essentially the same; if the manifestations of genius have infallible signs; if the slowly-established canons of criticism are always at hand and generally accepted; — have we not here an apparatus for literary proof which may properly be brought to every case as it occurs, so that when a book is ready for publication, we may announce beforehand

that it conforms to the law, and has all the known requisites for a classical position and repute?

Admitting all this, still how can the decree (if we may so call it) make impression less necessary? The very rules and facts on which the critic relies were first brought to his notice by impression, and afterwards confirmed by its repetition; and notwithstanding the enrolment of a book among the classics, it must still be read and judged by those who are summoned to acknowledge its claims. We cannot expect that a demonstration of its merits will, of itself, establish them in the general mind, or that a work will be liked because we are told that there are the best of reasons why it should be. This is not the way of the reading world. Men of sense would laugh to be called on to praise and be charmed with a book upon trust. If they should like it upon trial, they may feel the strength of the proffered *a priori* grounds of admiration, or discover satisfactory ones for themselves.

It seems, then, that criticism has both its scientific and its popular side. This, however, does not imply hostility between different classes of readers; for, though their methods may be somewhat unlike, and though an accomplished student may arrive at higher, more accurate and more delicate results than a less cultivated inquirer, yet both (professedly at least) are aiming at the

same thing, and, if true to their instincts and to undisputed principles, they will be mutual helpers. A fair-minded common reader does not take up a book with the idea that he is to decide whether a critic's decree upon its merits is sound or not. He will, most probably, come to a decision upon this point before he has done; but his immediate purpose is to learn something of the book from itself, and he goes to it with his heart open for its impression. If it pleases him, he in turn gives the writer all the help which the light and ardor of an excited mind can render, to complete the effect. It is peculiarly a solitary engagement. A great musical composition has a perpetual public exposition in some living artist. A play, designed for the stage, comes before us with the aids of action, costume and scenery to fulfil the dramatic intention. In both instances, illustration and excitement from abroad never fail to stimulate us to fill out the conception, in a way and measure we might not command by any effort of our own. Not so in the case before us. Here the reader is shut up with the author, to be himself, in some sense, interpreter, artist, player and judge. Critics and commentators may offer their assistance, and, in the hum of distant voices, he may catch the current opinions of the great world without; yet he holds these equally subject with the author himself to his separate judgment. An example like

this may show how popular instincts, and the convictions of those who have, probably, no literary ambition, are prepared to take part in critical decisions. We still leave to commanding names in literature their natural and necessary power with the public, their guidance and instruction of the less-favored, and especially the whole province of philosophical criticism.

What is the next step? Is the decree accepted? Not absolutely. Perhaps we are inclined to wait a little. In not a few cases, we would have the impressions of readers brought together. We would have those of more than one generation brought together. We demand a growing and accumulated testimony for a book. Not that the multitude of years and of witnesses adds a particle to its merits, or makes the earliest private decision in its favor more sound; not, perhaps, that we distrust in the least our single judgment; but because we wish, for all, the fullest evidence which can be had that men are right upon a point involving opinion. Besides,—those who are held to be the most competent critics, may have issued their decree *against* a book; and yet, in spite of this decision, it has and bids fair to have its host of admirers, and, among them, readers who are far from being dull or uncultivated. Here the judge is warned by his inferiors to revise his opinion, to see if he has not overlooked important elements, and applied



his system too strictly. He may even learn that some new law of taste has just been brought to light. While we admit then the advantage of having wise critics who deserve and inspire general respect and confidence, we should be prudent how we speak of their authoritative decrees, or of their power to settle literary questions,—except, perhaps, among themselves.

If such be the spirit and direction of criticism, we have little reason to fear that it will become less generous and intelligent, or less mindful of principles. The hard, mechanical, unfruitful certainty of a mere *dictum*, however just, will lose something of its repulsiveness, when the active, cheerful inquiries of individual minds, with their various humors, prejudices, associations and habits, have also a work to do in interpreting and sustaining the law. This cheerful activity among the different classes of readers is, perhaps, the best effect of having critical awards depend somewhat on popular sentiment. We see that it was not to subject men to the pains of hopeless uncertainty, that so many things have been left open to opinion and controversy. If there are doubts, they give occasion for thinking. If there is diversity of opinion, there is also room and necessity for comparing opinions. If a false, narrow, or over-refined taste has perverted us, a wholesome self-distrust will be likely to grow out of our better acquaintance with one another. A



quiet change will go on in our views of things and in our habits of judging, without hurting our vanity or exposing us to a very distressing charge of inconsistency. Obstinacy yields a little. Liberality gains a little. We talk less of our neighbor's heresies, for we begin faintly to discern that some beauty is folded in them, which before we would not look into. We drop or retouch dogmas which we have long held sacred; but we may, at the same time, discover that some of our opinions have more to support and commend them than we had suspected. We must not expect, or perhaps desire to bring all men to one way of thinking about books; but it will be delightful to see them all good-humored, while they are busily speculating upon subjects that are worth their curiosity.

It is little better than repetition to say that a book, well-established in public favor by impression or opinion, is also established by the often unobserved yet unvarying principles of taste. The gifted and studious will discern, define and systematically apply these principles. Many, probably, will be content to receive them from such authority; while a multitude of not less happy readers never get sight of them, and never seem to feel the want. Still, the decision, in which men generally rest at last, must be the fruit of obedience, whether conscious or not, to the same laws of the mind.

This truth should be pressed with some earnestness, because its tendency is both to make the reader's literary appreciation habitually prudent, and to give a little confidence, at least, to opinions which are just beginning to take form and prove their strength. It may gratify him to have some degree of assurance that his most headlong delight, or his instant condemnation proceeds from impulses, which are not wholly casual and fleeting. Moreover, he may so accustom himself to apply the principles of criticism, that he will scarcely be conscious of doing it; and hence he need not fear breaking or disturbing the easy, joyous current of ideas, which depends, not a little, upon his surrendering himself, for the time, to the writer.

Having considered the world as sitting in judgment upon those who may one day be its idols, let us pass to the author's own view of his chances among men, at a period when he can no longer urge a word for himself, other than what remains upon his silent pages.

Among the poets who have ventured to foretell their immortality, the tone of the prediction is various, though rarely worthy of the men. The attempt itself (always of more than doubtful prudence and delicacy) is seldom to be valued so much for the proof it gives of a noble self-confidence or infallible inspiration, as of the

poet's sympathy with his race, and of something characteristic,—it may be something infirm,—in his temper.

Horace, in sounding his distant praises, rejects, with dignified exultation, all funeral laments and honors for one who is never to die;—yet he can talk of building a fame to outlast stone and brass; to endure as long as the sacred rites of Rome; to be acknowledged not only in Apulia, but in Africa, Spain, Gaul, on the shores of the Bosphorus, &c. That a man so considered, so known, for strong sense and a shrewd, merry perception of folly, should seriously fall into a strain like this, may seem a little remarkable even to those who are most captivated by his diction and verse, and most willing to take, as nearly as they can, a Roman's view of self-com-mendation, and of the proper images for setting forth the stability of lyric renown. Still it must be acknowledged that in the two odes which celebrate the extent and permanence of his glory, the predictions, in some points, fall far short of the facts, and in none have they failed. Let the poet have the full advantage of this in extenuation of his boasting.

What a contrast have we in the modest, courtly aspiration of Pope, who, if we may believe him, would be satisfied that his 'little bark' should keep company with Bolingbroke's first-rate, on its way along the never-ending stream.

Who thinks of the convoy now? Who doubts which of the two is most in debt to the other for still being afloat?

Milton sings rapturously of fame in *Lycidas*; and, when a much older man, he presents the subject carefully in many of its aspects.\* But with what sobriety does he approach his own expectations,—with what dignity,—yet with a humility that affects us almost like sadness. When little more than thirty, he finds a place, in his controversy with the prelates, to state his preference for another manner of writing. In this well-known passage,† he announces his motive and preparation for undertaking some important poetical work; but we are concerned only with the spirit in which he contemplates his future name.

‘Although a poet,’ he says, ‘soaring in the high region of his fancies, with his garland and singing robes about him, might, without apology, speak more of himself than I mean to do,’ &c.

Then he passes to the literary exercises (chiefly in verse) of his first years, in which ‘it was found that the style, by certain vital signs it had, was likely to live.’ Still later, in the private academies of Italy, the fastidious scholars of the country gave unlooked-for praise to the pieces which

\* *Paradise Regained*. Book III.

† See ‘*The Reason of Church Government Urged against Prelaty*.’ Book II.

the young Englishman submitted, according to the custom there, as 'some proof of his wit and reading.' Hence he is emboldened to hope for higher things.

'I began,' he proceeds, 'thus far to assent both to them and divers of my friends here at home, and not less to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that by labor and intent study, which I take to be my portion in this life, joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to after times, as they should not willingly let it die.'

In such terms does this firm-tempered young man speak of himself, after he had written *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso* and *Comus*. In advanced years, and in his great work, he thinks it enough, when placing himself with the blind bards of old, to say,—

'Equalled with me in fate,  
So were I equalled with them in renown.'

And now, with our knowledge of the facts, we may proceed one step farther and imagine a writer looking into the future, to see what awaits him there. The revelation will often be very strange to him. He was prepared for times when his name should be clouded and his influence obstructed; and equally for the day of his restored and perhaps heightened favor; but

the course and complexion of his fortunes are not altogether what he had looked for. At times he is ready to exclaim :—

‘ Visions of glory, spare my aching sight;  
Ye unborn ages, crowd not on my soul; ’ —

but the day may be near when he will have much to vex and something to amuse him in the homage he receives and in the questions which are raised about him and his works. He must console himself with the thought that nearly all which he sees and hears is a proof of his continued, perhaps of his increasing importance, and of the almost personal attachment that is felt towards him by all orders of men. Let us recall some of his experiences.

He has passed among his countrymen, and in all nations for many ages, as an *individual*, with a name in every man’s mouth, with cities ready to fight for the honor of giving him birth, and with the credit of being the author of distinctly marked and most popular works, which have been the origin of a principal department of poetry, and its model ever since. Yet he is now told that there has all along been a great mistake in this belief. He is no longer to be a person, a unit, with a lawful name, but a set of ballad-singers, each with his own story upon the same great national subject.

He has written plays which have given him



the first name in poetry. Hence an ample biography must be invented for him, since there is scarcely anything to say from records or trustworthy tradition. He is not denied his rightful name; but there are undecided contests how it should be spelt; for he and the family seem to have cared little for the matter, and the people of his time as little for orthography generally. All this serves both him and us for amusement. But graver considerations are to come before him. He died without publishing his writings. They are in the hands of others and the property of others, and have been subject to maiming and corruption during many years of theatrical service. At length a posthumous edition appears, and, as we presume, a very careless one, for we are often perplexed for a meaning. Hence spring up a class of critics, especially devoted to him,—some of them eminent for general ability and scholarship, as well as for acquaintance with the early times of the country and the now somewhat antiquated speech. Their office is to settle the text and explain obscurities. But, by some ill-fortune, the larger part of them have been the most captious, assuming and quarrelsome set of men that ever claimed to be literary judges, or judges in any question. His mere name,—a fountain of love to common men,—is to them a war-cry. A new reading, or the discovery of an old copy with alleged contemporary corrections,



is received as a personal wrong, an invasion of some private right, and very soon the world is in arms. A pretty spectacle for a benign spirit, long withdrawn from our strifes, and who all the time hears himself hailed, with one voice, as the benefactor and glory of his race. Last of all, he sees that his plays, so far as representation is concerned, are undergoing hideous changes to adapt them to modern ideas; though some still think that in nothing is he more perfect, than in managing the course of the action for the highest stage effect. This adaptation most commonly consists in omissions of scenes and persons. But this is the least of his wrongs; for sometimes parts of different dramas are united by the aid of interpolation; sometimes a play is pieced with wholly foreign additions; and sometimes the plot is so transformed that the catastrophe is quite another thing.

He has been widely known as the explorer and interpreter of his native tongue, as an observer of human life and expositor of duty, as a biographer, as the bold and successful former of a style safe only for himself, and, finally, as a dictator in literary criticism. The light has not wholly passed from any of the monuments of his genius and wisdom. But it comes to his ears that he is to be better and longer known for an accident in his history than for the deliberate fruits of his studies. He is to be remembered

chiefly for the record of his conversation, made up by his extraordinary and equally immortal biographer. He cannot reasonably complain that he has unexpectedly surpassed himself; though, upon this very subject of a man's books and conversation, he has left the *dictum*,—‘Madam, the best part of an author will always be found in his writings.’ The wonder to him and all of us must be, not that his conversation was so memorable,—for we know that it was, in no small degree, his ambition and care,—but that such a record of it should have been made, and with such a bearing upon his reputation.

If we should bring into one view the fortunes of still other writers, who are considered as the most prosperous among the immortals, the lowly might be brought to think it better for a man to sleep quietly when he has no more to do with the earth in the body. But they will not persuade the soaring spirit that it is not worth ambition to be a great power in the world, ages after one's burial.



Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.  
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date: Oct. 2006

## **PreservationTechnologies**

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